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PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

By

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ
of the Society of Jesus

Newly Translated from the Original Spanish

By

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T-POLP-R-OE

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

to

THE READER

The matters I have treated of in the first and second volumes regard a religious life in general, but these I now treat of regard it in particular; and therefore I have entitled this third volume *Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection.* Things are so disposed in it that they do not only suit all other religious orders as well as our own, but also that they may be very profitable to all secular persons who aspire to perfection. For though the first treatise, for example, speaks of the end and institution of our Society in particular, yet it omits not to treat of several general matters, such as good example, zeal for the salvation of souls, diffidence in ourselves and confidence in God, fraternal correction, manifestation of conscience to our confessor and spiritual father, all which are subjects interesting to everyone. And, generally, all the virtues I treat of in this last volume are proper to all sorts of persons, because everyone may either embrace and practise them in desire, if the obligation of his state hinders him from observing them in effect; or he may make use of them to resist and overcome the contrary inclinations which nature causes in him. I hope, by the mercy of God, that the reading of this work will excite religious more and more to the practice of perfection, according to the duty of their profession; and will inspire seculars with a desire of imitating them as far as the state of each one will permit; so that the one and the other will hereby daily increase their fervor in God's service.

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SEVENTEENTH TREATISE

ON THE END AND INSTITUTE OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

CHAPTER I

The End and Institute of the Society of Jesus

ATTEND to thyself and to teaching, be earnest therein, for, so doing, thou wilt save thyself and them that hear thee (I Tim. iv. 16).

Attend to thyself, and attend also to the teaching and instruction of thy neighbor; apply thyself with all diligence to the one and to the other, for in this way thou shalt save thyself and also them that hear thee. In these two things consists the end for which the Society was instituted, as our Constitutions and the apostolic bulls say: "The end of this Society is not only to attend by the grace of God to the salvation and perfection of our own souls, but by the same to apply ourselves earnestly to the salvation and perfection of our neighbor." And this is to be done not in any "as you like it" fashion, but "earnestly," a word expressive of vigor, efficiency, fervor, and intensity. The Society looks for men who will go about attaining the end of their calling with fervor, vigor, and energy. Here we must take note that, as in our own case our aim should be not salvation merely, but salvation with perfection, so we are required by our institute not to be content with helping our neighbors unto salvation, but we should endeavor to get them to make progress and go forward in virtue and perfection, each one according to his state. And so Father General Claudius Aquaviva in his "Instruction for Confessors" recommends us not to set our eyes on having a great number of penitents, but on those that we have to deal with making good progress. We should take the same interest in the progress and perfection of our neighbor as in our own, using the same care and diligence over the one as over the other.

For this, the Society was founded in these troublous times. Our blessed Father Ignatius saw the Church of God well provided with religious orders that attend to their own spiritual progress, keeping up choir and divine service; but at the same time he saw her straitened and afflicted with heresies, sins, and great losses. Thereupon, inspired and guided by the Holy Ghost, he established this religious order, this troop and company of soldiers, to be, as he said, like so many light horse, ever ready to rush to the rescue against the sudden onslaughts of the enemy, and to defend and aid our brethren. And therefore he would have us free and disengaged from choir and other offices and observances which might hinder this end. *The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few* (Luke x. 2). How can we have the heart to let our neighbor perish and go to hell when it is in our power to succor him? St. Chrysostom says: "If you saw a blind man likely to fall headlong into a morass, you would lend him a hand; now seeing daily our brethren on the point of falling into the abyss of hell, how can we hold back and fail to stretch out a hand to them?"

Even of those holy Fathers of the Desert, whom God had called to solitude, we read in the Church histories that, when they saw the Church afflicted and persecuted by tyrants and heresies and the faithful ill off for teaching and spiritual succor, they quitted the repose of the desert, and went round making excursions into the towns, answering heretics, teaching the Catholics, and encouraging them to martyrdom. So we read that the great Anthony did in the time of Constantine; as also did another holy man named Acepsemas, who had been previously enclosed for sixty years without seeing or speaking to mortal man. And we read the same of many others. One of these, named Aphraates, gave the Emperor Valens a wonderfully good answer in this matter. This holy man, postponing his own peace and quiet to the salvation of the faithful, had quitted the cave in which he dwelt, and set to work to guide and guard the Lord's flock. For the emperor had given orders to banish the Catholics, not only from their temples and cities, but even from the mountains, where they used to make their processions, singing hymns and praising God. While Aphraates was thus engaged, he passed one day by the house of the emperor; and someone told Valens: "There goes that Aphraates, of whom all the faithful make so much account." The emperor had him called, and said: "Where are you going?" He answered: "I am going to offer prayer for your empire." The emperor said to him: "You would do better to pray at home, as monks generally do." To which the sagacious man replied: "Certainly you say well; that would be the better course if you left room for it; and so I did all the time that Christ's sheep had the peaceful enjoyment of their pastures; but now that they are in great danger of being stolen or devoured by wolves, one is obliged to rush in all directions to the rescue. Tell me, serene highness, if I were a delicate young girl, and while I sat at my work in my room I saw my father's house on fire, what would be the right thing for me to do? Would it be well for me to sit still, and for my tender years take no heed of the home of my father's being burned, or should I run in search of water to put out the fire? Wherefore, seeing the house of God our Father is now on fire, and that you yourself, sir, have set it on fire, it is to put this fire out that we, who lived before in retirement, now come from all quarters to the rescue."

St. Chrysostom, speaking of the care we ought to have for the salvation of our neighbors, makes use of another very pat comparison. Sailors on the vast ocean, says he, if they catch sight of a wreck a long way off, however good a wind they have to steer on their own course, nevertheless, in disregard of their own advantage, put their ship about, hasten to the spot, take in sail, anchor, and throw out ropes and planks for the drowning mariners to lay hold of and save themselves. So we ought to behave in our navigation of the wide ocean of this world, swept by many storms, pestered by many rocks and sand-banks, and the scene of so many shipwrecks. So, when you see a fellow voyager in danger, in the waves and tempests of this ocean, leave all your business and fly to his succor, for the necessity of a drowning man brooks no delay.

It was to this end, then, that God our Lord raised up the Society in such calamitous times, to succor and meet the particular need which the Church was then experiencing; it was a great stroke of His providence and a singular act of clemency. Writers of ecclesiastical history have noted and observed very reasonably that on the same day on which Pelagius was born in England to pervert and darken the world with his errors, there was born in Africa Augustine, that great luminary of the Catholic Church, to scatter by his radiant splendor the darkness of a malignant and dangerous heresy. Also the writer of our blessed Father Ignatius' Life observes that in the same year in which that infernal monster, Martin Luther, threw off the mask and began openly to declare war on the Catholic Church by preaching his blasphemies and heresies—it was in the year 1521—that same year God our Lord broke the leg of Ignatius at the castle of Pamplona, to heal him and change him from a dissolute and vain soldier into His captain and leader, and the defender of His Church against Luther. Hereby is seen the providence and clemency of the Lord, always careful to send new succors and reinforcements to His Church in the hour of her greatest need.

That same writer very well enlarges on this subject, and goes on to show how, when the Albigenses and other heretics were most wantonly troubling the peace of the Church, and the thorns of vices and wicked deeds had reached their greatest growth, and were smothering the good seeds which the Heavenly Sower had sown, God sent into the world those seraphs and lights of heaven, St. Dominic and St. Francis, that by themselves and by their sons and disciples they might withstand heresies, uproot errors, correct sins and reform manners, and enlighten and sanctify the whole world by their admirable example and doctrine, as those holy Fathers did, and their sons are doing at this hour.

God sent to His Church the military orders of knights at the time when she was so close beset by her enemies that it was needful to defend her by force of arms. We may understand the same of the other religious orders, and particularly of the Society of Jesus, of which we are now speaking. For at the time when the heresy of Luther started—who withdrew his obedience from the pope, denied the truth of the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and gave up sacramental confession—in that hour God raised up the Society, which makes particular profession of obedience to the pope, and the professed take a particular vow thereof, and which also takes special care to preach up those holy sacraments of confession and Communion, and to exhort the people to the frequentation of them and the reformation of their manners. As the commander in chief of an army, when he has joined battle with the enemy, from some high and lofty position watches attentively the ebb and flow of the battle, and when and where he sees danger provides for it, now sending on the right wing a troop of light cavalry, now on the left wing a picket of riflemen; so Christ our Lord, Captain General of this Christian army, is at all times watching from the height of heaven the needs of His Church, sending as they require fresh aid of doctors and heads of religious orders to reinforce His army. Herein the providence and mercy of our Lord clearly shine forth, permitting on the one hand the blow, and on the other bestowing the treatment. This, then, is the end and institution of the Society, and for this we are called to it, as the apostolic bull of its confirmation [by Julius III] says: To defend our holy Catholic faith against heresies, to spread and extend it among the heathen, and to preserve it along with good works among Christian people.

CHAPTER II

Of the Excellence of This Enterprise of Saving Souls, and of Its Great Merit and Value

THIS enterprise of saving souls is so high and exalted that for it the Son of God came down from heaven and became man; for it He chose His apostles, making them, of fishers of fish, fishers of men. There is no office higher than this, says St. Denis the Areopagite: "The highest and most divine ministry and office there is, is to help and co-operate with God to the salvation of souls"—*Omnium divinorum divinissimum est cooperari Deo in salutem animarum.* St. Chrysostom says: "There is nothing more pleasing to God, nothing that He takes more to heart, than the salvation of souls." So the Apostle cries out with loud cries: *Who wisheth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (I Tim. ii. 4). And the Prophet Ezechiel: *Is the death of the sinner my will, saith the Lord God, and not rather that he be converted from his ways, and live?* (xviii. 23). The Lord wishes all to be saved. He who helps to forward this purpose does the sublimest thing, and the thing most pleasing to God, of all the things that man can do in this life. St. Chrysostom says: "Though you give all your substance to the poor, and that substance be more than the riches of King Solomon and the treasures of Croesus, it is a greater thing to convert one single soul than to do all that." St. Gregory says it is a greater thing to convert a sinner by preaching and prayer than to raise a dead man to life; it is a greater thing, and a thing more regarded by God, than the creation of heaven and earth. Otherwise, look at the cost of it. It cost God nothing but to say the word to create heaven and earth. *He spoke, and all was made: he commanded, and all things were created* (Psalm cxlviii. 5). But that other cost Him more than words; it cost Him His lifeblood. The Apostle St. John declares to us how precious a work it is before God to be employed in saving souls; or, rather, Christ Himself declares it in these words, speaking in His own person: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for men, to take it up again in resurrection,* that they also may rise and live forever with Me (John x. 17). The saints here make this reflection, that He did not say, as He might have said: "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because in the beginning He created all things for Me;" but He says that His Father loves Him because He lays down His life for the salvation of souls, to give us to understand how acceptable and agreeable to God that work is.

In this same line of reasoning St. Thomas explains what Christ Himself said a little before: *As my Father knoweth me, so I know my Father; and therefore I lay down my life for my sheep* (John x. 15). St. Thomas says that Christ does not merely mean to say: "I know my Father with full knowledge as He knows Me"—for that He had already said, as appears in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew (xi. 27): *No one knoweth the Son but the Father, and no one knoweth the Father but the Son*—but as, if you asked a good son on earth the reason of what he was doing, he might answer: "I know my father and am aware, as they say, of his likings and wishes," so Christ our Redeemer had said a little before that, like a good shepherd, He would die for His sheep; and then as though they asked Him: "Why, Lord, do you offer so precious a life as Yours for a thing of such little value and price?" He answers: *I know my Father* (John x. 15). It is as though He would say: "I know very well the will of my Father and the love that He has for those sheep; and therefore with hearty good will I give my life for them, for I know that such is His pleasure." That is what should make us also busy ourselves with hearty good will over the salvation of souls, knowing that that is to the liking and satisfaction of God, and that His Divine Majesty greatly loves our being so occupied.

St. Chrysostom also reflects to this effect on what Christ our Redeemer said to St. Peter when, having asked him three times if he loved Him, all three times He went on to say: "If you love Me, feed My lambs and My sheep" (John xxi. 15-17). That was equivalent to saying: "I want you to exercise and show the love that you bear Me, by helping Me in this work of saving the souls whom I have redeemed with My blood."

The high excellence of this work and the extreme satisfaction which it gives to God, may also be seen in Christ Himself first and foremost, since for this act of giving His life for men the Apostle St. Paul says that the eternal Father has raised, glorified, and exalted Him above all things. *He gave him a name that is above every name, a name at which every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and in hell* (Phil. ii. 9-10). The Prophet David says the same: *Because he drank of the torrent, he hath lifted up his head* (Psalm cix. 7). And the Prophet Isaias: *If he shall lay down his life for sinners, he shall see sons and descendants that shall endure for long ages* (Isaias liii. 16). Because He laid down His life for sinners and suffered so much for them, therefore has the eternal Father so highly exalted and glorified Him.

St. Gregory on those words of the Apostle: *He that converteth a sinner from his evil ways and errors, shall deliver his own soul from death, and cover the multitude of his sins* (James v. 20), says: "If to deliver a man from bodily death, who though he die not today has to die tomorrow, deserves a great reward and recompense, what reward and recompense must he deserve who has delivered a soul from everlasting death, and is the cause of her living in glory forever, a glory which she can never lose!" Thus Holy Writ is not content with saying that they who preach Christ and teach men the way of their salvation shall attain to life everlasting—*They who make me known to others shall gain eternal life* (Ecclus. xxiv. 31)—but adds:

They shall shine as stars for all eternity (Dan. xii. 3); they shall be there in heaven like a moon and like a sun. Therefore God says by the Prophet Jeremy (xv. 19): *If thou separatest what is precious from what is vile,* if thou removest the souls whom I value so much from the vileness and baseness of sin, *thou shalt be as my mouth.* It is a common way of speaking, when one greatly cherishes another, to say: "I cherish him as my eyes and as my life." In that way, then, does God cherish him who goes about converting souls and drawing them out of sin. A soul is a most precious thing before God; therefore does He set so much store on help rendered to souls. It is written of St. Catherine of Siena in her Life that, when she saw a preacher pass along the street, she would go out of her house and kiss with great devotion the ground that the preacher had trodden on. Being asked why she did that, she replied that God had given her to know the beauty of souls in grace, and therefore she held them to be so happy who are engaged in this business of preaching that she could not refrain from putting her mouth where they had put their feet, and kissing the ground they trod on.

To this high dignity, then, the Lord has raised us. For this He has called and drawn us to the Society; this is our end and institute, to be fellow workers with God in the highest and divinest of works, which is the salvation of souls: *We are God's fellow workers,* says St. Paul (I Cor. iii. 9). *Let men hold us to be ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God* (I Cor. iv. 1). An apostolic office, an office for which God Himself came down from heaven and gave His lifeblood, an office for which we are called *sons of God! Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God* (Matt. v. 9). On this text St. Jerome, Theophylact, and others say that these peacemakers are not only they who are at peace within themselves, having gained the victory over their passions, and again they who make peace and effect reconciliations between their neighbors, but also they who make peace and reconciliations between God and men, converting sinners by their teaching and bringing them back into grace with God. Blessed, then, are these peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God, since such was the office of the Son of God, *making peace through the blood of his cross between what is on earth and what is in heaven* (Col. i. 20); for the Son of God came down from heaven to earth to reconcile men with God, to make peace and friendship between God and men. Therefore the angels sang at His birth: *Glory be to God in the heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will* (Luke ii. 14).

The lessons we should thence learn for our own spiritual advancement are: first, a great affection for our ministries and devotion to them, as being so exalted, so pleasing to God, and so profitable to our neighbor; secondly, a great sense of shame at God's having called us, being what we are, to a rank so high and lofty; and whereas I am not in a position to give a good account of myself alone, God has over and above entrusted to me and put in my hands the salvation and perfection of others. It is a wonderful good piece of advice that that apostolic man, our Father Francis Xavier gave, like a veteran and experienced soldier, in a letter he wrote to the fathers and brothers of Portugal. He says to them: "I advise you, my brothers, never to touch upon the office and ministry that you hold, nor upon the good opinion and esteem that the world has of you, except to turn it to your confusion, according to that saying of the prophet: *When they exalted me, then I humbled myself more, and went about in greater shame and fear* (Psalm lxxxvii. 16)." The higher the office to which God has called you, the more you ought to humble yourself.

An ancient father, very distinguished for learning and virtue [Father Jerome Nadal] used to say that, when he considered the high purpose and end of the Society and looked at himself, he felt so ashamed, seeing how insufficient and unworthy he was, that not only he felt no pride in seeing himself called to so exalted a function, but on the contrary it was an occasion to him of greater shame and humiliation. In this way the high state we are in will do us no harm, nor the opinion of our holiness that the world entertains, nor the honor done us on that account. The third lesson that we have to learn is to apply ourselves in good earnest to our own spiritual advancement, for to deal with our neighbor and make a better man of him, a great foundation of virtue is necessary, as we shall say afterwards.

CHAPTER III

That This Enterprise Belongs to All Members of the Society, and that All Have Their Share in It, Even though They Be Not Priests

SINCE some heart perhaps may be melancholy, thinking that the end of which we have spoken is only for priests, who hear confessions and preach and have such immediate dealings with their neighbor, we will give some explanation here for the consolation of those who serve and help in temporal and exterior offices. This end and enterprise belongs to all who are in the Society, and not only to priests and men in their studies. Thus all should know to what end their labors are directed, of whatever sort they be, and the value and merit of them, and thus be better disposed to do them. We all make one body, one order, one Society; and the end of all this body and Society is what we have said, to attend not only to our own advancement and perfection by the grace of God, but also to attend to the salvation and perfection of our neighbor. For the compassing and attaining of this end proper to our order, some must be preachers, others confessors, others lecturers, and others coadjutors to aid in outward offices.

So in war, for the gaining of victory, it is needful for some to fight and others to guard the baggage. The latter aid the former to fight and gain the victory, and deserve no less reward and remuneration than those who fight. As David said: *Equal shall be the portion of him who goes down to battle and of him who stays with the baggage; and they shall share alike in the division of the spoil* (I Kings xxx. 24). Holy Writ says that this is a standing rule in Israel to this day, and with reason, for they are all one army, and for the gaining of the victory the one is as necessary as the other; the one party could not fight if the other did not stay on guard with the baggage. So it is here; we all make one body, one army, one company and troop of soldiers of Christ, for this enterprise of the conversion of souls. This man could not preach, nor that other hear confessions, nor that other lecture or study, if there were not someone to remain in charge of the temporalities. Thus he who minds the latter helps in preaching and in hearing confessions and in saving souls, and has his share in the victory and fruit that is won. St. Augustine says that at the death of St. Stephen, the first martyr, while others were stoning him, Paul was keeping their clothes, and thereby did more than all the rest, since he kept the clothes of them all. If we may say this of an evil deed, much more may we say it of a good deed, since God is more inclined to reward than to punish.

Father Master Avila, in a letter that he wrote to two priests who were on the point of entering the Society, being already missioners and coming to a Society which makes that its profession, tells them not to fix their minds on rendering spiritual aid to their neighbor, nor be troubled at their not being employed in such ministries, since in the Society all that is done, down to the washing of dishes in the kitchen, is, he says, for the saving of souls. The saving of souls being the end of this order, and great profit of souls depending upon its preservation and increase, all that is done to preserve and increase this Society, though it be the discharge of very humble offices, counts for the conversion of souls, and should be done very cheerfully. Members as we are of this body and this order, every one of us by doing his duty and fulfilling his office helps to the fruit and profit that is made in the body, and so is partaker in the conversions and good works that are wrought throughout the whole Society. Our Father lays this down expressly in the Constitutions, speaking of the temporal coadjutors. So each one should be highly content and comforted in his office, taking it for a great blessing to be a member of this body of the Society, in which God is so well served and so much help is given to souls. Thus in the Society everything is the conversion of souls, the being cook, the being porter, the being sacristan, because the end of it all is converting souls, and whatever helps the Society helps to that end.

This may be put in a clearer light. For if it were only to preachers, confessors, and others who are immediately occupied with their neighbor's salvation that this glory belonged, and to them alone were to be attributed the good that is done to our neighbor, the people who would have most reason to be unhappy in their life in the Society would be superiors; for it is they who are least able to attend to these particular ministries, as the General and the Provincials, for they have quite enough to do in visiting provinces, answering letters, and conducting affairs, without their having any time left to occupy themselves with the good and utility of their neighbor. But the superior does more to help his neighbor by doing his office well and superintending the spiritual laborers who are under his charge, seeing that they all go on as they ought, than he would by hearing confessions or preaching as a private. The master or foreman of works does more than any single workman, in taking care that all do their duty. The commanding officer in war does more by arranging what has to be done than he would do by fighting as a private soldier—or, rather, he does all that the rest do by this helping and directing of all, and therefore the victory is attributed to him. In this way, he that is in the sacristy, and he that is in the porter's lodge and the other offices, gains souls as well as the preacher and the confessor, because he helps them and leaves them free so that they can exercise these ministries, which otherwise they could not.

This is the meaning of our all being one body, and all members of that body. As the members of the body have not all the same function, but each has its own, and yet the function which each member discharges, it does not discharge for itself alone, but for the whole man—the feet do not walk for themselves alone; the hands do not work for themselves alone; the mouth does not eat for itself alone, but for the whole man, and so of the rest—so it is in this mystical body of religion. This is a metaphor and comparison applied by the Apostle St. Paul to this same purpose, speaking of the Church. *The body is one and yet hath many members: and all these members make but one body. If the foot saith that it is not of the body, because it is not the hand, is it not therefore of the body? And if the ear saith it is not of the body, because it is not the eye: does it for this reason cease to be of the body? If the body were all eye, where would the sense of hearing be? And if it were all ear, what would become of the sense of smell? So God hath placed each member in the body after such a manner as he thought fit; and the eye cannot say to the hand: I want not your help; nor the head in like manner say to the feet: I have no need of you. God hath placed in his Church in the first place, apostles: in the second prophets: in the third place, doctors. To some he hath given the grace of healing, and to others the speaking of divers tongues* (I Cor. xii. 14-28). *But it is always one and the selfsame spirit that worketh all these things, distributing to each one as he pleaseth* (I Cor. xii. 11). It is the same in a religious body; not all can be eyes, nor tongues, nor ears; all cannot be superiors, preachers, and confessors; there must also be in the body hands and feet; *and the eye cannot say to the hand: I want not your help; nor the head say to the feet: I have no need of you;* because all these offices are necessary for gaining our end. And thus the fruit that is produced in the Society is produced by all.

In the second place, all members of the Society, brothers as well as fathers, help and should help to the salvation of souls, not only in the manner said—and by the example of their good and holy lives, which, as we shall say afterwards, is a chief and very powerful means to this end—but also by their words in familiar conversation and dealing with their neighbor, saying good and profitable things for the salvation of their souls. This is a means productive of much fruit, and our holy Father in the Seventh Part of his Constitutions, speaking of the means whereby we are to help our neighbor, places this among the first. He sets it down for a general means which all those of the Society are to contrive to apply, even though they be lay brothers, and them he specifies expressly; and that we might understand and practise this the better, he has placed it among the rules. "Let all according to their state, when occasion offers, endeavor to improve their neighbor by pious conversations, and to advise and exhort him to good works, especially to confession." Thus not only the preacher and the confessor, but the caterer, accountant, porter, companion, are to contrive to help their neighbor by good conversation, speaking on occasion to people of things profitable to their souls; to one, of the devotion of the rosary; to another, against swearing; to another, of confession; to another, a little more advanced, of examination of conscience every night. We know of sundry lay brothers who have done much good to those they met by their good talks and conversation, and drawn many to confession, and gained many souls to God, more perhaps than sundry preachers and confessors.

In the third place, all help to the conversion of souls by their prayers, which is one of the principal means to that end, as we shall say afterwards, and belongs to all. Many a time a preacher, or a confessor, or one who goes to assist the dying, will think that he is doing good, and all the while it may be that the good is done by his lay brother companion, who has commended the matter to God, or by the cook, who took the discipline the night before the sermon, begging God our Lord to convert some soul. Oh, how many spiritual children are the lay brothers destined to take away from preachers and confessors, children which they thought were their own, and in the day of judgment it will be seen that they were not theirs, but belonged to the lay brothers! Joseph is not the father of the Child, only His putative father—*he being, as was thought, the son of Joseph* (Luke iii. 23). They seemed to be the spiritual children of the preacher or the confessor, and people thought that these were their spiritual fathers; and they are afterwards found to be children of tears, children of the prayers of the lay brother. He that appeared sterile shall have many children; and he that had the name of father and seemed to have many sons shall find himself perhaps without any (I Kings ii. 5). Rejoice and be glad, ye that appear sterile; for if you do what you ought, it may be that you will have more spiritual children than the preachers and confessors, and you will be astonished afterwards to find yourself with so many sons (Isaias liv. 1; Gal. iv. 27). The Prophet Isaias says: *Who hath begotten to me all these children?* I am not a preacher, I am not a confessor. I am not learned, *and who hath given me these?* (Isaias xlix. 21). Do you know who? Prayer, sighs, tears, and groans. *God hath heard the desire of the poor, the prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds.* God complies with the will of them that fear Him and grants them what they ask. This it is that gives so many children to him who appeared sterile, and did not bear the name of father.

From this consideration Father Francis Xavier used to say that preachers and confessors should be helped, in one way, not to esteem themselves more than their brethren, thinking that they are doing more good and working more; and in another way, to keep greater union and charity among themselves.

There is another advantage which the brothers have herein, and it is this. When they produce fruit in souls in the manner we have said, they are safer than preachers and confessors and lecturers; because the preacher and the lecturer are in great danger of vainglory, and the confessor runs the risk of being right or wrong in his decisions. And besides, these ministries carry with them great cares and embarrassments, insomuch that sometimes, in their anxiety to discharge them, people forget themselves and their own spiritual advancement; while the brothers have their business and their merit and their gain secure; they are free from that vanity, from those cares and scruples. Thus the brothers share with us the enterprise, and often bear the better part in it: but they do not share with us the loss; that falls upon us alone. God grant that it may not happen sometimes that the preacher gets the vainglory, and the lay brother all the profit and fruit that is gained! That would not be a fair division; rather let us all rejoice in the fruit of our labor, doing ever all things to the greater glory of God.

CHAPTER IV

How Necessary It Is for This End First to Ground Ourselves Right Well in Virtue

THESE two things that we have said, our own improvement and the help and improvement of our neighbor, make one and the same end in the Society; they are so conjoined and interlaced together that the one is adapted to the other, helps it, and is necessary for it. So we see that the Society uses different means for the improvement of her members from those that are used by other religious orders in which the help of their neighbor is no part of their institute. Our blessed Father Ignatius used to say that, if he had looked only to God and our private spiritual advancement, he would have prescribed certain things in the Society which he omitted to prescribe, for the regard he had for our neighbor for the love of God Himself. He added that, if he looked to himself alone, he would go through the streets naked, tarred with feathers and covered with mud, to make sport of the world and for the world to make sport of him. But the great desire that he had of helping his neighbor repressed in him this impulse of humility, and made him carry himself with the authority and decency which his office and person required, and omit those extraordinary mortifications. And if he followed his natural taste and inclinations, and the spiritual profit which he drew from the ecclesiastical chant, he says that he would have established choir in the Society; but he omitted to establish it because, he said, the Lord had taught him that He wished to make use of us in other ministries and different exercises.

Since the Society aims not only at its own improvement, but also at that of its neighbor, it gives us the necessary means for our own personal progress after such a manner that they shall also dispose and fit us to help and improve our neighbors. It also wishes that our ministerial duties in aid of our neighbor should be helps to our own advancement in perfection, and that we should understand that our own growth in virtue consists in doing them well. Thus the ministrations that we exercise on behalf of our neighbor we should take as means to our own spiritual progress; and the grace and aid which our Lord gives us for our spiritual growth and improvement is with a view to our neighbor, that so we may better aid and advance him; and if we were not to work at that we should deserve that the fountain and stream of the gifts of God should dry up, because for this it flows and this is the grace of our vocation.

Joseph's being raised up and seated on the throne of Egypt, and having given him the gifts which were given, was not for his private dignity and advancement, but for the good and advancement of his brethren and people. *It was for the saving of you that God sent me before you* (Gen. xlv. 5). So also in our case God has called us to this state, and in it gives us such blessings, for the good and profit of our brethren; therefore Christ compares us to a light and to a city, since all the coming forth of light is for others.

But let us speak of each of these two parts by itself, although always with reference to the other. As for the first, it is certain that, for a man to be able to do much for the help and improvement of his neighbor, he must first be greatly helped and improved himself. So the Apostle puts in the first place, as the foundation of the rest, *Attend to thyself* (I Tim. iv. 16). The first thing to be done is for each one to look to himself, and apply himself in earnest to his spiritual advancement. God our Lord orders spiritual things and the operations of grace according to the operations of nature. *The Divine Wisdom reacheth from end to end strongly, and disposeth all things sweetly* (Wisdom viii. 1); and to show that He is the author both of the one and of the other, God wills that in the operations of grace there should be observed the same order as in the operations of nature, wherein, as philosophers say, like begets like.

Besides general causes, as the sun and the heavenly spheres, we see that for the production of natural things there is required as a further cause an immediate agent of the same species, that so a thing may have the form which it has to transmit to other subjects. Fire produces fire; light, light. It is the same with spiritual things. To put into others the form of humility, patience, charity, and the other virtues, God requires the immediate cause which He uses as an instrument—a preacher or a confessor—to be humble, patient, and charitable.

Moreover, as we see in the course of nature that a plant, say, a lettuce, does not produce seed while it is small, but only when it is grown to maturity—then does it begin to shed its seed, to multiply itself in others—so in the things of the spirit and of grace God requires a man first to be well advanced and grown in virtue into a perfect man before begetting spiritual sons to God and being able to say: *In Christ Jesus through the gospel I have begotten you* (I Cor. iv. 15). For this reason the first thing the Society takes in hand is to attend to ourselves and to our own spiritual advancement; it would have its subject well grounded in this first of all. To this end there is such a long probation in the Society; two years of novitiate to begin with, before starting the studies; and when these are over, she puts her men once more into the furnace and the mold, keeping them another whole year in probation, that in case study and speculation have dried up and cooled any of their spirit and devotion, they may refit themselves once more, now that they are on the point of entering upon their ministry to their neighbor, and not treat of matters of the spirit without themselves having the spirit. And even after that it seems that we are never to cease being novices; our profession is put off for so many years that one may say our whole life is spent in novitiate and probation before the Society gives a man his grade as a formed workman in its service. Much is to be entrusted to him, and so he must be much proved and tried first for all he is worth; he is to be put to high things, dealing with others to make them not only good, but perfect, and so it is necessary that he himself be perfect.

Hence it will be seen how great is the mistake of those to whom these probations appear long, and who even fancy that their time is lost in them, and would like to see themselves already preaching and dealing with their neighbor. The moment they get a little devotion in meditation, or one or two good thoughts, they would fain be in the pulpit. The holy Abbot Ephrem lamented this, and says that this is not the spirit of God, but the spirit of pride and vanity. You have come, he says, into religion to be taught and instructed, and scarcely have you commenced to learn when you want to teach others. You can hardly put two syllables together, and you want to be a schoolmaster. You cannot yet bear a reproof or take an admonition given you, and you want to be rebuking others and dealing out to them counsel and advice. *Antequam doceatur, docere appetit; priusquam discat, iura legesque ferre ambit; antequam syllabas iungere noverit, philosophatur; priusquam corripi sustineat, corripit.*

St. Gregory, in his "Pastoral Cure," treats this subject excellently, illustrating it by familiar comparisons. It is necessary, he says, to admonish these folk to observe and and consider that nestlings, trying to fly before their wings grow, instead of going up, fall down; and secondly to observe and consider that, if fresh and new-built walls are loaded immediately, the whole building will fall, and they who so proceed, instead of raising buildings, will prepare ruins. The walls must dry and the building set, before it is fit to bear the weight that is to be laid upon it. Thirdly, he says, they must likewise observe and consider that women who are brought to bed before their time, and before the babe in the womb is quite formed, do not fill with their issue the houses of the living, but the tombs of the dead. A great foundation of virtue and mortification is needed to deal with our neighbor; without that, there will be more danger than profit. They will infect us with their evil communications sooner than our goodness shall impress them. Hence it is, says St. Gregory, that Christ Himself, though He was the Wisdom of the eternal Father, and wisdom was His as perfectly in the instant of His conception as afterwards, would not begin preaching till He was thirty years old; and then the first thing He did was to retire into the desert, fasting and practising other corporal austerities, and being tempted by the devil, to give us an example of the great preparation and perfection that are required for so high a ministry, although He had no need of these previous preparations Himself. And he there brings in very well what is said of Him in the holy Gospel, that, when at the age of twelve years He stayed behind in Jerusalem, *they found him in the Temple seated in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions* (Luke ii. 46). Observe, he says, and ponder attentively how, when Jesus Christ was twelve years old, His parents found Him in the Temple, seated in the midst of the doctors, not teaching, but listening and asking questions, this to teach us that he who is yet a child and imperfect in virtue should not dare to teach, nor take on himself before his time an office so high, since He Himself at that age would not teach, but only listen and ask questions, although it was He Who gave wisdom and knowledge to those doctors, being true God as He was. Hence also it was, says St. Gregory, that, when He had commanded His apostles and disciples to go and preach the Gospel all over the world, though He could have given them at once the virtue and perfection necessary for so doing, He did not give it, nor would He have them preach in the weak and imperfect state in which they were, but said to them: *Do ye tarry in the city, until ye are endowed with virtue from on high* (Luke xxiv. 49). Stay in the city until the Holy Spirit comes upon you. All that goes to teach us the necessity there is of being well grounded in virtue, humility, and mortification, to be able to go out and deal with our neighbors with profit to them and without injury to ourselves.

The glorious St. Bernard cites to this purpose the text of Canticles (viii. 8): *Our sister is small, and hath not yet breasts:* she has not yet milk to be able to rear children.

He takes these words to refer to the Church before the coming of the Holy Ghost; and says that then the Church was small, and had not breasts nor milk to be able to rear children, until the Holy Ghost came, Who filled the apostles and disciples with His gifts and graces and gave them abundant milk. *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to utter the great things of God* (Acts ii. 4-11). Then, filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke wonders, and converted people in thousands. If, then, you wish to produce fruit in souls and rear spiritual children for God, you must have your breasts very full and well stored with good milk, the one breast with much virtue, the other with right-down good and sound doctrine.

St. Jerome on that text of Ecclesiastes (xi. 3): *If the clouds be full, they will pour rain upon the earth,* says that preachers are clouds, since as clouds are charged with water wherewith they moisten the earth, so preachers are they who are charged with the water of Gospel teaching, and with that they moisten the dry hearts of men. Quoting Isaias (v. 6): *I will bid the clouds not to rain upon it,* he says that this is the punishment that God threatens men for their sins, to hold up the rain of His word, and not send preachers at all or permit the preachers to be such as will not preach profitably. And this is one of the greatest punishments that God can inflict on His people. But when these clouds are quite full of rain from heaven, they will be able to rain and shed their water over the earth, and say: *Let the earth hear the words of my mouth, let my doctrine gather like rain, let my speech pour out as dew, as rain upon the grass* (Deut. xxxii. 2). Then they will be able to fertilize the earth, to soften and move men's hearts to compunction, that they may yield fruit of good works; for if clouds have no water in them, what shall become of them? Do you know what? What the holy Apostle Jude says in his canonical epistle. *They are as clouds without water, that are carried round by the winds*

(Jude i. 12). As clouds without water, light and airy, and having no weight nor substance in them, are easily carried away by the wind in one direction or another, so if you are not full and replenished with virtue, humility, and mortification, the wind of vanity and reputation and the other passions and cupidities of the world will carry you away like a cloud without water and without weight, and your quality of cloud, charged with high ministries and duties, will serve only to make you more vain, the sport of all the winds that blow.

Speaking of rich people, St. Augustine says: "It is hard for a rich man not to be proud; there is nothing that riches so readily create and engender as pride. All things breed their own maggot, which gnaws and wastes them. Cloth breeds and engenders its moth, timber its wood louse, wheat its weevil. The maggot of the apple tree is different from that of the pear, and that of the wheat from that of the bean; so riches engender another maggot, very different from these and worse than them all, and that is pride." The rich men of the world, seeing the extent of their property and riches and the esteem that men have of them and the account that they make of them, are in all the greater danger of pride on that account. How much greater must be the danger of those who play the part of clouds, soaring over the earth, watering it and giving it blessing; respected by all for the lofty and high ministries which they hold, honored and esteemed by all the world, great and small, with all possible honor and reverence? St. Chrysostom says that greater reverence is due to priests than to kings and princes, and even to our own earthly parents, since they make us live in the world, but priests and spiritual fathers make us live to God. There is no greater honor, no higher estimation, than a reputation for sanctity. To others we pay exterior honor while often at heart we have no respect for them at all, but these we honor as saints. *Bow down thy soul to a priest, and to a magnate bow down* *thy head,* says the Wise Man (Ecclus. iv. 7). A strong foundation of humility is necessary to bear the weight of all this honor; pride and vainglory is the maggot which destroys and ruins good works; and in the highest and most distinguished there is greater danger of this maggot's being engendered. So this is the first danger that St. Chrysostom reckons in the priestly state, and he says that it is a reef more formidable than any that poets imagine.

CHAPTER V

That Not Only Ought We Not to Neglect Our Own Advancement to Help Our Neighbor, but We Need to Be More Careful of It and More Diligent about It on His Account

RECOVER thy neighbor according to thy strength, and look to thyself that thou fall not in, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxix. 26). This is the end and institute of the Society, and the royal road for us to travel by. From this royal road we may diverge in two ways: one to the right, by withdrawing entirely from all intercourse with our neighbor to attend to our own improvement; the other to the left, by giving so much attention to our neighbor as to forget ourselves. Both these extremes are vicious and dangerous. We will speak shortly of both of them, that we may hit the mean, in which virtue and perfection lie. To begin with the more dangerous extreme, which is that of giving ourselves over so entirely to our neighbor as to forget ourselves, Christ our Redeemer warns us of this, saying: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man make for his soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26). There is no compensation that can compensate for the loss of that. Thus reason and charity alike require that for no occupations should we drop the care of our own souls, nor go slack over our own improvement, since well-ordered charity begins at home. This is the first thing that the prophet begs God to teach him. *Teach me, O Lord, goodness, discipline, and knowledge* (Psalm cxviii. 26). He puts goodness in the first place. No one should forget or neglect himself under pretense of helping and advancing his neighbor; that would be a great error. Even the heathen Seneca said that such as neglect themselves for the sake of others are like wells that give to others their clear water, and keep the dregs and the mud for themselves. Pope Nicholas in a decree has another comparison, which further illustrates this point. Arguing that bad priests can administer the sacraments, inasmuch as thereby they harm only themselves, he says they are like a lighted torch, which benefits others and gives them light, while it wastes away and consumes itself.

St. Bernard on those words of the Canticles: *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. i. 2), expatiates very well on this point. He lays down two works that the Holy Ghost does in us; the one is giving us our first start in virtue for our own profit, and that he calls *infusion;* the other is imparting to us gifts and graces for the benefit and profit of our neighbor, which he calls *effusion,* because it is given to us to pour out and impart to others. Infusion, he says, must come first, and then effusion. The first thing is to receive into ourselves and become quite full of virtue, then to pour out and impart the same to others. He draws a comparison which illustrates the matter well. If you have judgment and understanding, you must contrive to be a bowl, and not a pipe. There is this difference between the pipe and the bowl or basin of the fountain, that the pipe passes the water at once upon receiving it, without keeping it, while the bowl or basin of the fountain, which is closed all round, first gets filled itself and then, when it is filled, what there is over, it shares and imparts without losing or diminishing aught of its own. Thus, then, you must contrive to be, not a pipe, but like the basin of the fountain.

And, says St. Bernard, that you may not think that what I say is my own invention and make light of it accordingly, you must know that it is not mine, but of the Holy Ghost, Who tells us by the Wise Man: *The fool brings out his whole mind, but the wise man keeps back and reserves some for the future* (Prov. xxix. 11). The fool pours it all out like a pipe, but the wise man delays and keeps something to himself for afterwards; he seeks to be himself first well replenished and full as a bowl. But, alas, facts go the other way about! At this day there are very few bowls in the Church, but a great many pipes, ready to pass on the water of the word of God to others, and water the earth of their hearts, making it green and fresh and fruitful, while they themselves remain dry and barren. *Canales multos hodie habemus in Ecclesia, conchas vero perpaucas.* These folk are so charitable, he says ironically, that they would fain give out before gathering; having nothing for themselves, they want to give to others. They are prompter and more disposed to speak than to listen, and would willingly teach what they have not learned; they would like to govern and rule others, while they cannot govern themselves. This is not charity, for no degree of charity can take priority over what the Wise Man says: *Have pity on thine own soul, pleasing God* (Ecclus. xxx. 24). This is the first step, to have pity on our own soul, our very own, by endeavoring to serve and greatly please God; after that must come our efforts to help and cure others. "If I have only a little oil for myself, do you think I am going to give it to you and have nothing left for myself? I am keeping it for myself," as that widow answered (III Kings xvii. 12), and except at the bidding of the prophet I will not give it away. And if any importune me, taking me for more than I am worth and thinking I have enough to share, I have my answer for them: *Lest perchance there be not enough for you and for me, go rather to them that sell* (Matt. xxv. 9) and have abundance, for it is not reasonable that I be left poor and empty-handed to give to you.

It is not meant that others should have relief and you affliction, but that there should be equality (II Cor. viii. 13), says St. Paul. That other is not good charity; it is enough that you love your neighbor as you love yourself; that is the commandment of God (Matt. xxii. 39). And so St. Paul says: *There should be equality.* Do not love your neighbor more than yourself; do not lose yourself and your own spiritual advancement to attend to the advancement of your neighbor; do not be careless of yourself to take care of others. That would not be good charity. *Let my soul be full of thy grace, as of rich and nourishing food, and my mouth and my lips shall praise thee for joy,* says the Prophet David (Psalm lxii. 6). You yourself must first be filled to the full and made rich, that out of the abundance of your heart your mouth may speak. *Therefore it is needful,* says the Apostle, *that we should attend very diligently to the things that we have heard, that we should not be emptied out of all and lose them* (Heb. ii. 1). We must look to it carefully that all the liquor of heaven does not leak away from us, but keep it first for ourselves—overflow certainly, but not leak.

Not only must we not neglect our own improvement to help our neighbor, but for that very end we need to be more careful and diligent about it. Great is the stock of virtue and mortification that is required to deal with people of the world, that they may not infect us with their bad tastes and make us take up their manners rather than they ours. *He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled,* says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xiii. 1). He that has to do with pitch must be very careful not to get any on his hands; he must keep his hands well bathed in oil. So for us to deal with worldly folk, we must always be full of God and bathed in prayer, otherwise we may reasonably fear that the pitch will stick to our hands, and those folk will carry us over to their side and infect us with their bad tastes and ill habits.

One of the chief admonitions that our blessed Father

Ignatius, as we read in his Life, used to give to those who had business with their neighbor, was to be fully convinced that they were not living nor dealing with perfect men, but going among a race not holy, and often unjust and deceitful, *in the midst of a depraved and perverse nation,* as St. Paul says (Phil. ii. 15). And this admonition is of great importance, to make us keep well on our guard, armed and cautious, that the evils and scandals that we witness may not infect and take hold of us. Medical men and those who tend the sick, especially in cases of a contagious malady, are wont to carry with them many perfumes and preservatives, that the disease may not catch them, nor that exhaltation and bad odor that comes from their patients infect them. Now our business is with the sick, and with the sick of a contagious disease that may infect and lay hold of us if we are not well fortified with prophylactics and preservatives of high virtue, prayer, and mortification. It readily appears what a good and healthy stomach the confessor and missioner must have, whose hands are in continual contact with putrid and stinking sores, not to have his stomach turned by the stench of sins heard in confession, and a pool stirred within him of evil thoughts and movements.

They say very well that we must be like certain rivers there are, that enter into the midst of the sea and keep their water fresh without any intermixture of the salt sea water. St. Chrysostom, speaking of what priests ought to be who have to live in the world and mix with their neighbor, says that their souls should be as the bodies of those three children of Babylon, unburned in the midst of the furnace. We walk among flames, not of straw or tow, but fiercer than those of the Babylonian furnace. Here darts out a flash of envy, there one of ambition, and there another of sensuality; here one caused by those who form rash judgments and tell tales about me. Now you must be such as not to burn in the midst of these flames. And since fire makes its way in at every opening given to it, and leaves what it finds blackened and disfigured, beautiful though it were before, the priest of God, says the saint, must be so much on his guard that not even the smoke may touch him. Very much on his guard must one be, not to burn in the midst of so many devouring fires, and not so much as to be tarnished and speckled by the smoke. Still better does Christ our Redeemer warn us of this, saying: *Ye are the light of the world* (Matt. v. 14). Light, says St. Augustine, passes through unclean places and by dunghills without contamination or infection; rather it cleanses, purifies, and disinfects them without receiving any taint itself. So we should pass by these dunghills and cesspools of sinners and sins, noisome and filthy as they are, without their affecting us, but rather cleansing and drying them up and taking away their bad odor, as does the light of the sun.

We must, therefore, always have a great care of our spiritual duties, meditation, examens, spiritual reading, penance, and mortification. We should never leave out the ordinary meditation that we have in the Society for our spiritual profit. We must make great account of this, since the devil, seeing that he cannot hinder us from helping our neighbor, that being our end and institute, endeavors to get us to devote ourselves to it and be absorbed in it to such an extent as to forget ourselves and neglect the means necessary for our own profit and preservation. When a river goes out of its bed, it fertilizes the lands by which it passes, and gathers into itself all their filth; that is the devil's object in getting us to give ourselves without moderation to looking after our neighbor. This is apt to be a very common temptation, and so it is necessary to be very well fortified against it, all the more seeing that, as we shall say presently, the chief means that we can take to that very end of benefiting our neighbors and doing them much good, is to take care of our own spiritual advancement. The more numerous our occupations, the greater need we have of prayer and recourse to God, to do them well as the saints did.

We read of the blessed St. Dominic that he made such a division of his time as to spend the day on his neighbor and the night with God. That is how his teaching was productive of so great fruit, because at nighttime he arranged with God what he was to do during the day; he first concluded his business with God, and then concluded it with men. And Christ our Lord gave us the example of this, so many times spending whole nights in prayer in lonely places, persevering in prayer, as the evangelists write. He spent the days in going up and down, preaching and teaching and curing the sick and possessed persons, and during the nights He kept watch and persevered in prayer: *erat pernoctans in oratione Dei* (Luke vi. 12); not that He had need of this precaution as St. Ambrose notes, but to give us an example.

We must be particularly careful on this point when we are out of our own houses. The rules of those who go on missions take special notice of this: "Let them who go out be on their guard not to omit the spiritual duties usual at home" (Rule 26). With good reason is it said, "be on their guard," because certainly it is very necessary to take particular care not to fail on this point when we are out of our houses. At home, on the one hand our occupations are more moderate; and on the other there is the bell to call me to meditation and examen, and the sight of all the others doing that goes to make me do the same. But when you go out of the house, on the one hand there come extraordinary occupations wearying and overwhelming you; and on the other, as you hear no bell, nor have the sight of the example of others to help you, but rather many hindrances and distractions, if you do not use great care and diligence, your spiritual duties will often be left out. That is why well-trained men are needed to go on the missions. Our Father Francis Borgia used to say that he was never satisfied with any mission that he sent out except when it gave him a great deal of pain; and the pain was the parting with the men of the stamp of those that were needed, and whom he usually selected for such undertakings. Much more is needed to go abroad than to stay at home; that is why missions are the proper work of the professed of four vows, who are supposed to be men well proved and advanced in virtue. And withal it is necessary that they should not stay too long on the missions, but at stated periods return to the house to recollect themselves and refit, that the spirit may not be overwhelmed and exhausted by so much occupation.

Hence we may learn that, if this is to be said of spiritual ministrations in aid of souls—that we are not for them to leave out our meditation, or examens, or other ordinary duties regarding our own spiritual good, since it is no good charity to neglect and forget oneself to attend to others—it is plain what is to be thought of material and exterior occupations, temporal duties and affairs, whether carried on by seculars or religious; for this doctrine concerns all, and everyone may apply it to himself according to his state. A man should never become so entangled and absorbed in exterior occupations, however good they be and proper to his state, as on that account to forget his salvation or, if he is a religious, to forget his meditation, his examen, and the rest of what bears on his spiritual progress and mortification; the greater in all reason should not be abandoned for the less. We should always put in the first place what touches our own spiritual advancement; such is the will of God and of our superiors. A student should not drop or curtail his spiritual duties for his studies. Little will it profit him to turn out a great doctor if he does not turn out a good religious. The more so, as ordinary observance of spiritual duties will not hinder studies, but rather further them much, the Lord giving light and understanding to improve in studies.

We read of Albertus Magnus that he used often to say to his scholars, and he has left it written at the beginning of his "Summa," that the divine sciences are learned better by prayer and devotion than by study; and he used to quote to this effect the words of Solomon: *I desired, and there was given me understanding; I invoked, and there came on me the spirit of wisdom* (Wisdom vii. 7). And St. Thomas Aquinas, who was his pupil, came by this means to know and understand so much. He used to say that what he knew, he had gained more by prayer than by human industry and study. And of St. Bonaventure it is related that, while he was lecturing in the chair of theology at Paris with great competence and satisfaction, and composing at the same time some books with the applause of all the world, one day he received a visit from St. Thomas Aquinas, who was his intimate friend and contemporary. St. Thomas asked him to show him the books that he studied. St. Bonaventure took him to his cell, where he showed him some few books in which he studied, that he kept on his table. St. Thomas desired to see those special books whence he drew such wonderful ideas, and begged him to show him them. Then the saint pointed out to him a praying place, where he kept a very devout crucifix, and said to him: "These, father, are my books, and pardon me, and know for sure that that is the chief book from whence I draw all that I read and write; and I get incomparably more profit and greater light of true science at the foot of this crucifix, having recourse to it in my doubts to be instructed, and by hearing and serving Mass, than by all other books and literary exercises." This answer left St. Thomas in greater admiration and devotion to the saint.

CHAPTER VI

That We Must Beware of the Other Extreme, Which Would Be Withdrawing from All Intercourse with Our Neighbor under Pretense of Attending to Ourselves

SOMEONE may say: "If there is so much danger in dealing with neighbors, I have no mind to run such risks, but I will retire as far as I can, and busy myself solely with my own advancement and salvation, seeing that I am more bound to look to myself than to others, and it is not right to put myself in danger of perdition to save other people." This is the other extreme into which it is possible to fall, withdrawing from the royal road of our institute. To this also we have an answer in the holy Gospel, in the parable of the talents. The holy evangelists (Matt. xxv. 14; Luke xix. 15) relate how a lord divided his goods among his servants: to one he gave ten talents; to another, two; and to another, one. The first and second made good use of their talents, and gained with them as much again, and for this they were highly praised and rewarded. But he who had received one talent buried it and hid it away under ground; and when the master came to ask an account, he answered: "I knew that thou wert an austere man, driving bargains to the utmost, and seeking to reap and gather even what thou hast not scattered and sown; and so I have hidden the talent that thou gavest me down in the earth; here it is entire as thou gavest it me." The lord says to him: *"Wicked and slothful servant, out of thine own mouth I condemn thee* (Luke xix. 22). Knowing that it is my way to gather and reap where I have not scattered or sown, why didst thou not trade with my money, to return me the capital sum with interest? Take away from him the talent and give it to him that hath ten talents, who with the five that I gave him hath gained other five, for thus shall he be rewarded and promoted. And as for this useless and unprofitable servant, cast him into the outer darkness, where shall be naught but weeping and gnashing of teeth." St. Augustine explains this parable to our purpose. He says that Christ our Redeemer proposed it to warn and instruct those who for feebleness and sloth have no mind to take up the office of dispensers in the Church of God, saying that they do not want to give an account to God of other people's sins. Let them take warning, he says, from this example; for we read of no other cause of the condemnation of this servant than his not having traded or made anything out of the talent he had received; for he had not lost it, nor invested it badly; but had kept it well, hiding it under the earth that it might not be stolen.

St. Ambrose says: "Let us look to it that God call us not to account for an idle silence"—*Videamus ne reddamus rationem pro otioso silentio.* For there is a profitable silence, as was that of Susanna, who did more by her silence than she could have done by speaking; she was silent with men, and spoke to God (Dan. xiii. 35). There is another silence that is idle, and that is bad—*Est enim et negotiosum silentium, et est silentium otiosum.* As we have to give an account to God for idle words, so also for this idle silence, which consists in this, that, when we might and ought to aid and advance our neighbor by our words, we fail to do so. Of us particularly God must ask an account of this, since He has entrusted this talent to us and given us this office and ministry of assisting others; and thus He will ask of us an account not only of our own spiritual progress, as He will of those who have no other object in life, but also of how we have busied ourselves in helping and winning over our neighbor; and if He finds that we have hidden the talent and buried it under the earth, He will drive us away from His presence and chastise us, as was done to that wicked and idle servant. Thus we must have a care of both services, and not quit the one for the other. We must take example herein from Christ our Redeemer, of Whom it is said in the Gospel that on the night of His Passion He rose from prayer and went to visit His disciples, and from them He went straight back to prayer. So we should go out from prayer to labor for the help of our neighbor, and straightway return to the retirement of prayer.

St. Bernard treats this matter well on those words of the Bridegroom to the bride: *Arise, make haste, my beloved one, my fair one, and come* (Cant. ii. 10). To what? He says, doubtless to the saving of souls. But how is this? Is it not the same Bridegroom, Who a little before in the same chapter so earnestly forbade our waking His bride? *I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the mountain goats and the hinds of the fields, not to awake or rouse my beloved from sleep until she herself wishes it* (Cant. ii. 7). How does He thereupon command, not only that she should rise, but that she should rise in haste? Does He in one moment, and as it were simultaneously, forbid them to awaken His bride, and then bid her rise and do so in haste? What means this so sudden change of will and purpose on the part of the Bridegroom? Think you, says St. Bernard, that it was fickleness on the part of the Bridegroom, and that what He wished one moment He wished otherwise in that next? Not so, but He would commend to us these necessary alterations that we have to make, from the sleep and repose of prayer and contemplation to the labor of action necessary for the help of our neighbor. For the love of God cannot stand idle; it is a fire, and claims forthwith to kindle and inflame all around it with that same love. And for this reason the bride must not only quit the repose of contemplation and rise from prayer, but she is to rise in haste, to let us see the great and vehement desire she should have to help her neighbor. And therefore, says St. Bernard, scarcely has she tasted a little repose on the bosom of her Beloved, when He at once awakens her, and bids her go about other things more profitable. And I say "more profitable," because in the eyes of God helping others along with ourselves is more profitable and more highly to be prized than devoting ourselves solely to our own advancement and recollection.

Nor is this the first time that this has happened to the bride in her dealings with her Beloved; the same has happened at other times before. She would wish to be ever rejoicing in the delight and repose of contemplation and the embraces and sweet kisses of her Beloved; and so she entreats, saying: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. i. 1); and He answers that her breasts are better than wine, giving her to understand that she ought to have children, and bestow her care and attention on them. Remember that you are a father and have children, and that you have to give them milk and rear them, and that you must often leave your repose and quiet to give them sustenance and remedy. We have a figure of this in Jacob, of whom Holy Writ says (Gen. xxix. 23) that, when he thought to enjoy the embraces and kisses of Rachel, who was barren, they gave him Lia, who was blear-eyed but fruitful. So now, when the bride desires the kiss and sweet embraces of her Bridegroom, they commend to her the duty of a mother and of rearing children. *Thy breasts are better than wine* (Cant. i. 1). For better than the sweetness of the wine of contemplation, and more pleasing to God at the time, is the fruit of preaching and converse with our neighbor and gaining souls to God. Though Lia is not so fair as Rachel, she is more fruitful, and her fertility supplies and quite makes up for the lack of the beauty of Rachel.

Though the contemplative life is more perfect than the active, yet when to the contemplative life there is joined this active life of teaching and helping our neighbor and gaining souls to God, that is more perfect than the contemplative life alone. So St. Chrysostom explains the saying of St. Paul to the Romans: *I could wish to be anathema myself from Christ on behalf of my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh* (Rom. ix. 3). So great was the zeal that he had for the salvation of souls, that he desired to be removed for some periods from the most sweet conversations and company of Christ, and cease to indulge in his acts of love, to apply himself to the profit of his neighbor; and that was in a way making himself anathema from Christ for their sake. And all the doctors acknowledge this to have been a supreme act of charity.

Thus what seems a loss is not a loss, but a great gain. We must persuade ourselves that we shall lose nothing of our own spiritual profit by attending to the profit of our neighbor; rather we shall gain and profit more, and grow in virtue and perfection. By way of illustration and confirmation of this, Clement of Alexandria brings up sundry good comparisons. Wells, says he, bring up better and purer water the more you draw from them; and, contrariwise, when you draw nothing from them, the water gets stagnant and bad. A knife is kept bright by use for cutting; and left unused, it thereupon goes moldy and rusty. Fire loses nothing by burning and setting alight other things, but rather gains and spreads the more. In human sciences we see that he who teaches others learns much by teaching, and in that way men grow very learned. So also it is with this spiritual and divine wisdom; especially since the word of God is a *sharp, two-edged sword* (Heb. iv. 12) by which he who cuts others cuts also himself. The lesson I give to others is necessary also for me; my conscience thereupon stings me with the thought: "How is it that you don't do yourself what you tell others to do? Woe to them who preach and do not practise!" Seeing in confession the falls of other people is a warning to me to walk in fear and caution, begging God to hold me in His hand and give me grace not to let me fall in that way. Helping this and that person to die makes us keep the hour of death present before us, and try to be ever prepared for it. Visiting prisons and hospitals, making up quarrels and effecting reconciliations, gives us a better knowledge of the miseries of this world and a higher esteem of the favor that the Lord has done us in calling us to religion. In a word, all our ministrations not only are not occasions to make us worse, but rather rouse us from slumber, and invite and incite us more to virtue and perfection.

Add to this the great mercies that the Lord shows to such as work for their neighbors. If to them who do corporal works of mercy He has promised so much, as we read in Holy Writ (Matt. xxv. 35-40), what shall it be for those who do spiritual works of mercy, which are as much greater as the soul is more than the body! St. Chrysostom says that to those that saying of the Gospel right well applies: *Give and it shall be given unto you* (Luke vi. 38). And that is what the Wise Man says: *The soul that gives blessing shall grow fat; and he that inebriateth shall be inebriated* (Prov. xi. 25). The soul that doth good to her neighbor shall thrive; and he that replenishes others and inebriates them spiritually with desire and love of the things of heaven, shall in his turn be replenished and inebriated by God with His divine consolations. Some liken them to the almoners of princes, to whom they give much to distribute; and if they give away much, they give them much. But this comparison does not go on all fours; for if the almoner be faithful, he has nothing left on his hands, and himself grows no richer for giving to others; but they who help their neighbor by spiritual ministrations are themselves enriched by giving to others and enriching them. So that is a better comparison of others, who say that they are like the nurses that suckle the children of kings, whom the king maintains and supports by meats from his royal table; and they with what they have over support and suckle the infants. In this way they are nourished whose occupation it is to suckle the children of the King of Heaven. He sends them food from His divine and royal table, so ample and abundant that, when they are themselves quite sated and enriched, they may be able out of their abundance to share it with their spiritual children. All which St. Peter Chrysologus admirably expresses in these words: "In the way that kings feed the nurses of their children with delicate food that they may suckle them with the purest of milk, so the sovereign King of Heaven is wont to do with the ministers of His word. Notwithstanding that they may not deserve it, yet in view of the sustenance that they have to give to His Majesty's children, He feeds and nourishes them with the viands of His heavenly table, to make their milk richer and the nourishment they impart more delicious."

We in the Society particularly must always go on this presupposition, since in the Society God has made our waiting upon and helping our neighbor a means to our own spiritual advancement, that being our institute and vocation. So it is said expressly in the bull of Julius III, where, after the sovereign pontiff has laid down the end of our institute and ministries, he goes on to say: "Let him take care to have before his eyes all the days of his life God in the first place, and after that his vocation and institute, which is a way to God." Thus, as the spiritual progress of sundry religious orders of monks depends on careful assistance at their choir duties, a regular observance of enclosure, and fasts and austerities proper to their vocation, so our progress and perfection depend on doing well our ministrations to our neighbor, for it is to that we are called, as they are to that other end. Thus we may say to our neighbor what St. Paul says: *You are our joy, our glory, and crown* (Phil. iv. 1; I Thess. ii. 20). St. Ambrose says on that passage: "It is clear that the improvement and perfection of his disciples is the joy and perfection of the master." So we must understand that this is our merit, our spiritual improvement and perfection.

Thus, though recollection and a great affection for prayer is an excellent thing in the Society, yet any prayer and recollection that withdraws us from our ministries to our neighbor is a temptation in the Society. If you were out there in the world, or in another religious order whose business was other than this, it might be a movement of the good spirit and perfection to withdraw to make more meditation and attend to yourself alone. But here in the Society it is not a movement of the good spirit, but a temptation and delusion of the devil, who transfigures himself into an angel of light and, under color of your spiritual progress and taking no risks, is seeking to remove you from your institute. The prayer of the Society should be in conformity with our vocation, that we may be better heartened to help our neighbor, that we may say with holy Job: *When I go to sleep, I will say: When shall I rise? and once more I will wait for the evening* (Job vii. 4). Our occupation, then, at meditation should be to dispose and prepare ourselves better to fulfil our ministries; and our prayer will be all the better, the better prepared for that we come out of it. The more you grow in the love of God, the more inflamed should you become with desire to gain souls to God, and seeking and trying to get others to love and serve Him along with yourself.

It is related of a religious of the Order of St. Francis, a great servant of God, that, having labored many years in the conversion of the Indians, he desired to recollect himself a little, to prepare for death with more diligence and care. So he returned to Spain, and withdrew from all dealing with his neighbor. It is said that every time he put himself in prayer he seemed to see a vision of Christ crucified, Who with loving complaint and rebuke said to him: "Why hast thou left me on this cross, and gone to seek thine own quiet and repose?" Admonished and much moved by this vision, he returned to the harvest which he had left, where he worked for many more years.

CHAPTER VII

Sundry Remedies against the Pusillanimity of Those Who Withdraw from Helping Their Neighbor for Fear of Losing Their Own Souls

THOROUGHLY to root out of our heart the temptation of pusillanimity with which the devil is wont to assail some timorous and scrupulous persons, who think they are putting themselves in danger of the loss of their own souls by trying to save others, we must in the first place understand and persuade ourselves of an important truth that will be a great help to this purpose. It is that we shall be safer and better protected where God places us than in any other position that we were thinking we should be in. Going by obedience about the streets and squares, hearing filthy and impure things from penitents in confession, we shall be better shielded and safeguarded than in our own cell, there by ourselves, retired of our own will, stealing away from those ministries for fear of a fall. In that seclusion possibly you may find yourself burning in a flame of evil thoughts, whereas there in the ministry you would have been very secure and quiet, because God had put you there and would guard and defend you. *Lord, thou hast encompassed and guarded us with the buckler of thy good will* (Psalm v. 13), the good will of God, commanding and placing us there.

St. Basil takes good note of this. Think not, he says, that all you have to do to be chaste and free from fleshly temptations is to live in retirement and see nobody. Not so. St. Jerome in the solitude of the desert, dining on herbs, his limbs crushed with severe penance, tells us that many a time he fancied himself taking part in the dances and balls of Roman ladies. Though his face was wan and sallow with much fasting, his body cold, and his flesh dry and almost dead, still his will did not cease to take fire with evil thoughts and to feel great motions of impure desire. On the contrary, Palladius relates of the Abbot Elias that God had given him such a great gift of chastity that he presided over a convent of three hundred nuns for forty years in as much peace and quiet as if they had been men, without feeling any temptation or motion or danger in point of chastity.

Those three children were thrown with their clothes and shoes in the midst of the Babylonian furnace, and the fire did them no harm, not even to a hair of their garments; whereas the servants of the king, who kept at a distance and were on their guard against the fire, were burned to ashes by it. God was powerful enough to prevent their burning in the midst of the flames, who entered them for His love; nay, the flaming mass was changed into a garden of flowers and a paradise of delights, where they stood praising and blessing God. So it befalls those who for love of that same God and zeal for His honor and glory, walk in the midst of the fire of the Babylonian furnace of the world. Where others take fire and are consumed, they are praising and blessing God, giving Him hearty thanks for the favor He has done them in calling them to religion; and where they see others drawing down perdition and damnation upon their souls, they gather greater knowledge and abhorrence of the vanities of this world and greater esteem of what they have in religion. *To them that love God, all things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). To them who for love of God and obedience busy themselves in these ministries, everything turns to good. They gather honey from hard rock, and the sweetest oil from rugged crags. Where there are faithful hearts anxious to please God, where a man is never intruded or put into such offices as ours without being lawfully called, there is no cause for alarm, but rather of great confidence in the Lord, that since He puts us in such offices, He will draw us well out of them.

That we may be thoroughly penetrated with this truth, and more confident and encouraged in our ministries, leaving aside many other motives, I will speak now particularly of one that we have for this in the Society, that is, the particular grace of religious vocation. This is quite a main point and a source of great consolation, as well for our present purpose as for many others. Every religious order has a particular grace and help from the Lord to gain the state of perfection to which its members are called; for God never calls anyone to any state or end, but He gives him also suitable means and strength and grace, as needful to gain the perfection to which he is called. St. Thomas founds this doctrine well on Holy Scripture and natural reason, for *the works of God are perfect* (Deut. xxxii. 4). So, if God institutes a religious order for an end, He also must give it the natural means and aids to gain that end, otherwise the work of God would be imperfect. So we see His Majesty acts in the order of nature. When He gives a power to any purpose, He also gives the means suitable for that power to come to act; otherwise, philosophers say, it would be an idle and vain power. The same holds good in supernatural things and the order of grace; such an order must be not less perfect, but rather more perfect, than the order of nature. So, when God institutes a religious order for any end, He gives it all the means and aids necessary for that order to be able to gain its end; and this we call "the grace of religious vocation."

Now, as religious orders are different, each having its own mode of procedure and particular end and holy purpose for which it was instituted, so also God gives them a particular grace and blessing to gain that end for which He instituted and designed them. To the Carthusian monks God gives a particular grace to observe enclosure and abstinence; to the Hieronymites, to keep their choir well; and so we may run through the other religious orders. Now the Society is a special religious order, instituted by apostolic authority in the Church of God, having for its special end the helping of souls; and to gain that end the Lord has given us peculiar and special means, which the sovereign pontiff sets down in the bull of institution, which are to preach, to hear confessions, to lecture, to teach Christian doctrine, to give the Spiritual Exercises, to effect reconciliations, to visit prisons and hospitals. Thus, as the Society is an order called by God to this end of helping souls, so also is it called to the exercise of these ministries as the means to gain that end.

This is to be carefully taken notice of as a very consoling fact, that not only the end, but also these means and ministries which we use with our neighbor are proper to our institute and belong to us by the rule approved and confirmed by the vicar of Christ, as appears by the bull of our institution issued by Julius III. Thus, then, it is by this rule that men of the Society are preachers, confessors, and lecturers. And not only spiritual ministrations, but also the corporal works of mercy which the Society does for the benefit of its neighbor, as visiting prisons and hospitals, are done by virtue of our rule and institute, as the same bull shows.

Coming now to the point, it follows that the Society has a special aid and grace from God our Lord to gain this end of saving souls for which it was instituted and for taking the means proper to our vocation and institute, given us by God for that end, and this is the grace of vocation proper to this religious order of the Society of Jesus. Thus our Lord will co-operate with us in a special manner and put special force and efficacy into the means we take to gain this end, for such is the special grace of this order; and so we find it by experience every day by the bounty and mercy of the Lord. What, think you, is the reason why a preacher of the Society goes on a mission—sometimes a young man who has just finished his studies—and sets a whole town in commotion? Everybody comes to confession; it looks like Holy Week; reconciliations are effected that many others had tried in vain to effect; public scandals are put an end to, that neither civil nor ecclesiastical authorities had been able to check. Think you that this is done by your virtues and learning or by your talent and gift of preaching? Not a bit of it; this is the special grace of the order to which you belong, that being its institute, and these the means proportionate thereto; wherefore God co-operates with them in a particular manner and gives them particular force and efficacy to attain their end. On the other hand—and this is a good confirmation of what I say—we see cases of persons who have left the Society, men who in it seemed to have wings and soar on high, and were listened to and produced fruit; they thought that out of the Society they should also be able to fly aloft and do the like; but the wings being the grace of their religious vocation, when they went out of the Society, they left them here behind them and found themselves birds without feathers.

In the First Book of Maccabees we have an example much to this point. Holy Scripture tells us that the Maccabees had done wonders in their battles, fighting most valiantly and gaining great victories without suffering any defeats themselves, and so they had a great name and reputation all the world over. When some of the people of Israel saw this, there grew in them, along with rivalry, ambition; and they desired and said: "Let us, too, make a name for ourselves as these have done." They put their saying into execution; they gathered an army, and went out to fight the enemy. But the affair succeeded not according to their expectation; they returned covering their faces for shame. The enemy went out to meet them, routed them, and put them to flight, and there died two thousand of them. Holy Writ thereupon notes the reason thereof. They fell and were routed, and where they thought to win were beaten, *because they were not of the lineage of the men whom God had chosen to deliver the people of Israel* (I Mac. v. 62). Thus we have nothing to pride ourselves on, no ground to attribute anything to ourselves; to God and to our religious vocation we owe all that we are. *The Lord hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament,* not by the learning and talents that we possess, but *by the spirit that he imparts to us* (II Cor. iii. 6). Because such is our institute and you are a member of this religious order, God co-operates with you and gives you a particular grace and aid to produce much fruit in your neighbor, and so by your helping them on, not only do you lose no ground yourself, but rather you too get on thereby and grow in virtue and perfection. This is the special grace of this our religious vocation, and a particular effect thereof. This consideration is a great help to keep us from being disheartened.

St. Bernard well observes that, when the Bridegroom bids the bride to rise from the sleep of contemplation, He does not say *go,* but *come* (Cant. ii. 10); a word of no small encouragement to us, whereby we are given to understand that He does not leave you by your going, but carries you and draws you to Himself thereby. He does not send us on these ministries to remove us from Himself, but to unite us more closely to Himself; and He carries us and goes along with us. Thus we need not fear losing thereby, but should rather gather great courage and great confidence and strength, believing that thus we shall gain and thrive more.

We are told in Holy Scripture of a king's son who, to encourage his servants to do a certain deed, said to them: *It is I who command you, be strong and fear not* (II Kings xiii. 28). Since it is Thou, O Lord, Who commandest me to occupy myself in these ministries and deal with my neighbor, what can I have to fear? I shall be safer and better protected in the midst of bad women, hearing their confessions and preaching to them, if Thou hast put me there, than I should be, shut in between four walls of my own will; since it is Thou, O Lord, Who commandest it, Thou Who settest me at it. *Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because thou art with me* (Psalm xxii. 4).

Hence also it will be seen how great is the delusion of those persons in religion who, following their own judgment and opinion, say: "If I were in such a place, or in such an office or ministry, I think I should find consolation and serve God there better; in this house or ministry where I am, I am quite out of sorts and seem not to get on at all." Oh, what a delusion and huge deceit! How can you think that things will go better with you there where you wish to station yourself, and not go well where God stations you? We have known persons who, not settling down in the ministries and posts where God and obedience placed them, looked out for other posts and managed to bring their superior's will over to their own, thinking so to serve God better and with more fruit; but they did so badly in the change of situation which they desired and contrived, that they came to see that this had been a punishment of God. Truly we should tremble at the thought of desiring anything of our own will, any office or place or post whatsoever, but let ourselves be carried and governed simply by God by means of obedience; for where God put us, there we shall be better and safer and more secure.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the First Means of Doing Good to Our Neighbor, Which Is a Good and Holy Life

WE will now mention some general means of doing good to our neighbor, means which our Father sets down in the Seventh Part of the Constitutions, leaving out other particular means, proper to priests, of which he speaks in the Fourth Part. And though what we shall say will be in view of the spiritual profit of our neighbor, nevertheless they will be things appertaining also to our own spiritual advancement. For, as we said at the beginning, these two things are so united in the Society that what is a means for helping our neighbor is also a means for our own advancement; and what is a means for our own advancement is also a means for the better helping of our neighbor. Thus what we shall say will be an instruction that may be of great service to all men generally. The first means that our Father lays down there to profit our neighbor is a good and exemplary life. He writes: "The first thing that will help will be a good example of all propriety and Christian virtue, that by good works even more than by good words they may edify those with whom they deal." A good and holy life, being oneself under control and discipline to begin with, is the principal and most efficacious means of doing much good to our neighbor. As the better a tree is growing itself, the more fruitful it is for its owners, so the further a preacher or confessor is advanced himself in perfection, the more useful he will be to others.

The importance and necessity of this means is shown by this consideration in the first place, that it is certain that the example of a good life goes further to persuade men than any amount of words and sermons. So Christ our Redeemer began to teach the way of salvation by deeds first, and then by words. *Jesus began to do and to teach,* says the Evangelist St. Luke (Acts i. 1). He began by working for thirty years, to teach afterwards for only three. And the glorious Baptist, says St. Jerome, on this account chose the desert, there to preach Christ. *I am the voice of one crying in the desert* (John i. 23). The holy doctor asks how the Baptist comes to choose the desert to preach in, since that seems rather a place not to be seen or heard by anybody than to preach. He answers: The preacher and herald of Christ chose the desert that men, seeing the new life in the preacher, might begin to admire and be moved to penance, to give up their vices and seek to imitate the preacher. He knew well that example was a more effectual means to move hearers and produce fruit in them than exclamations and words. So it is said in the Gospel: *He was a burning and shining light* (John v. 35). Burning with love of God, he shone forth with great splendor on his neighbors by the example of his so wonderful life.

It is a trite saying of Seneca: "The way by lessons and precepts is a long way, but that by example is short and effectual, because men believe more what they see than what they hear"—*Longum est iter per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla.* St. Bernard gives another reason for this. Example is so effectual to move others because they are thereby persuaded that what is told them is feasible, seeing him who tells it them practise it and put it in execution, and that is a great encouragement to them to put it in practice. St. Augustine says that so great is the infirmity and weakness of man, that it is difficult for him to do good unless he first sees the example of it in others; and on that account he says that it is very important for a teacher and preacher of the Gospel to be a good man, to give a pattern for those who hear him to imitate. So St. Paul bade people imitate him as he imitated Christ. *Brethren, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ* (I Cor. iv. 16).

Add to this that, when it is seen that a preacher and teacher conforms his life to his doctrine, that makes people believe that what he says comes from his heart, and so it has force and efficacy to move and persuade; but when it is not so, all his preaching goes for little or nothing. St. Basil says, and St. Chrysostom, that such a one is no true preacher or teacher, but a pretender and impostor. He is like, they say, to an actor in a comedy; he plays the part of a king, or a knight, or a rich man, and he is no king, nor knight, nor rich man; so is he who preaches only in words. You give a good presentation of humility, but you are not humble; a good presentation of contempt of the world and worldly honor, but you have not despised the world entirely nor its honors; you are a player in a farce and a comedian, not a Gospel preacher. St. Basil well likens these people to painters who paint very well the beauty of a man on a piece of linen or canvas, while they are themselves very ugly; so, he says, are preachers who, proud people themselves, know very well how to depict humility and say elegant things about it. Impatient people know how to give a good picture of patience; chatterers and woolgatherers are able to say beautiful things about silence and recollection. St. Augustine compares them to milestones, that show the traveler the way he is going, while themselves remain where they are. Such also he says were the scribes and Pharisees, who directed the Magi to Bethlehem, not going there themselves.

St. Jerome on those words of the Wise Man: *The sluggard buries his hand in his bosom, and thinks it too much trouble to raise it to his mouth* (Prov. xxvi. 15), says that hiding of one's hands below one's arms, and not caring for laziness to raise hand to mouth, is the way of a preacher who does not do what he says, nor fit his deeds to his words. St. Gregory Nazianzen says that he who preaches and does not act accordingly, draws souls with one hand and drives them away with the other; does with one hand and undoes with the other. These are the scribes and Pharisees whom Christ rebukes in the Gospel. Woe to them who say and do not! They neither move nor do any good with their words. *But he that doth what he preacheth, he shall be great in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 19). These are the evangelical and apostolic preachers, and they who produce much fruit in souls by the good example of their lives. As holiness is a thing supernatural and divine, all men pay holy people a measure of veneration and respect more than human. They see and hear them, not as men, but as angels; they take what they say as coming from heaven, and so it moves and makes an impression on their heart. Therefore St. Paul requires of God's workers that they be *beyond reproach* (I Tim. iii. 2), *not to be put to shame* (II Tim. ii. 15), *an example to the faithful in charity, chastity,* and the other virtues (I Tim. iv. 12), that so their teaching may have force and efficacy to excite others and draw them over to themselves. This, then, is the chief means to aid our neighbor, a good and holy life: first, for example's sake; secondly, because, for God to take us for instruments to work much good in our neighbor, it is very important that we be well advanced in virtue and mortification.

In the Tenth Part of our Constitutions our Father treats of the preservation and increase of the Society and the means to aid us to the spiritual end for which it was instituted, which is the salvation of souls; and he says that the means which unite the instrument with God and dispose it better to be guided by His divine hand, which are goodness and virtue, are more efficacious than other means which merely enable it to get on with men, such as learning and other natural and human gifts; so we must lean principally upon the former. He writes: "Let all give themselves to solid and perfect virtues and spiritual things, and reckon them of more account than learning and other natural and human gifts; for these interior qualities it is that must give effect to the exterior in view of the end proposed to us." And the reason of this is clear. For if the business had a human end and belonged to the natural order, human means and human prudence were necessary to make sure of it; but the end we aim at is supernatural and divine—to move hearts, to convert souls, and draw them out of sin. It is not in our competence to engender sanctity in souls; that belongs to Him Who said at the beginning of the world: *Let there be light, and there was light* (Gen. i. 3). Our learning, our prudence, our diligence and industry, and all the natural and human means that we can employ are out of all proportion with this end. God it is Who enlightens hearts and speaks words of life; all the efficacy of the instrument to produce fruit in souls springs from God. Thus those means which better conjoin and unite us with God will make us better and more effectual instruments for the conversion of souls. The more conjoined and united we are with God, the better shall we be able to receive in ourselves the influences of His graces and heavenly gifts, and communicate them to others.

St. Denis the Areopagite, speaking of the holiness and perfection that priests and ministers of the Gospel should have, through whom God is pleased to impart His gifts and His blood, says that they must first be holy in themselves to make others holy; they must be perfect to make others perfect; they must have so much light and knowledge of God as to be able to enlighten and illuminate others—*sacri et sacrantes, perfecti et perficientes, illuminati et illuminantes.* They must be so kindled and inflamed with the fire of love of God as to make others catch fire, and kindle and inflame them with the same love; for, as St. Gregory says: "He who is not on fire himself, will never set fire to others"—*Qui non ardet, non incendit.* That holy friar, Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valentia, used often to repeat these words: "How can burning words issue from a cold breast?" Then will your words set your neighbor on fire with the love of God, when they come forth from a heart burning and inflamed with the love of God. Then will you set the world on fire with the fire that the Son of God came to cast on the earth: *I came to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?* (Luke xii. 49). Then will one word go for more than a hundred.

Plato said a thing in which he said more than he knew; that, as the loadstone has this virtue, that by touching iron it impregnates it with the attractive virtue which itself has, so that the iron which has touched the loadstone also attracts other iron to itself in the same way that the loadstone itself does, so men touched by God have the virtue of attracting others to God. St. Augustine, as he tells us ("De Civitate Dei," xxiv. 4), was greatly struck with this property of the loadstone when he put it to the test. He saw how an iron ring, on touching a loadstone, drew and fastened to itself another ring, and that another, and that other another, till they made a chain of them in the air wonderfully interwoven. Now, if our words are not as the words of men touched by God, how shall they draw others to God? If you are not on fire with the love of God, how are you to inflame others? Even in the secular schools rhetoricians say that, to stir others, you yourself must be stirred to your innermost heart; no way is more effectual than that. How can I move another to tears when my own eyes are dry? How can I move him to grief if he sees that I show no grief nor emotion myself? How move him to indignation if he sees that I am not at all indignant? In the same way, then, how shall you move others to contempt of the world when you have not succeeded in really contemning it yourself? How can you give them a liking for mortification when you yourself have no taste for it, or make others humble when you are not humble? It is only fire that burns, only water that wets, nor can anything give to another thing the color which it has not itself. How can you fasten and impress upon others what you have not yourself? You will be like the discharges of firearms and artillery without ball, that fill the air with thunder-sound and rumbling, but do not knock down walls nor kill the enemy. Such are preachers who have nothing in them but words; it all goes in thunder and noise, *as one beating the air* (I Cor. ix. 26), as St. Paul says. Their cries beat the air, but they upset nobody, nor strike home to hearts, because there is no ball, no substance, in them. They have none of that virtue and spirit which give force and efficacy to all the rest.

A talent for preaching does not consist in phrases and tricks of rhetoric, nor in saying things highly sublime and subtle. Not such was the preaching of the Preacher of the Gentiles, that vessel chosen of God to carry His name all over the world, as he says to the men of Corinth: *When I, brethren, came to your city, I did not come preaching Christ with elegance of words or profound learning; for I reckoned myself not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (I Cor. ii. 1-2). And further on he says: *My words and my preaching did not rest on persuasions of human wisdom, but on the manifestation of the spirit and of truth, that your faith may not be founded on human wisdom, but on the power of God* (I Cor. ii. 4-5). In the "Ecclesiastical History in Three Parts" it is related, to the great praise and credit of the ancient Fathers, that they taught by holy instructions and wise counsels, away from all affectations and flowers of rhetoric, and, as prudent physicians, applied remedies suitable to the infirmities of the conscience of their hearers. Such should be our sermons and spiritual discourses. We do not go there to preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ, as the Apostle St. Paul says (II Cor. iv. 5). You may take it for a certainty that preachers who make a parade of great learning and eloquence and perfect mastery of their mother tongue, will do very little good; first, for the reason we have already mentioned, that the judicious portion of the audience understand very well that he who preaches in this style is a man who enjoys the sound of his own voice, is fond of talking and cutting figures, and is more anxious to pose as a good speaker than desirous of profiting them; secondly, because this very elegance makes the fruit fall off, and the greater the elegance, the less the effect. That saying of rhetoricians is true, which Quintilian quotes: "The gist and meaning of a speech falls to the ground, where the phrases are too much praised"—*Iacet sensus in oratione in qua verba laudantur.* That is to say, men drop their attention to things, when words are elegant to excess; the words steal away the hearers' attention from the meaning, and they look away from *what* is said to them for looking at *how* it is said to them. Now, if even teachers of rhetoric censure this and hold it for a great fault in an orator, how much more is it to be censured in a preacher of the Gospel, who has to attend only to the advancement and salvation of souls! *To each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for a useful purpose* (I Cor. xii. 7)—the good of souls; and on this the preacher should ever keep his eyes.

St. Jerome says: "The mark of a good sermon is not the applause of the hearers, nor their going out saying, '*Never did man speak thus* (John vii. 46); didn't you see what fine things he brought in and how well he said them?' but the compunction and tears of the hearers and their change of life; let that be your praise." *Lacrimae auditorum laudes tuae sint.* In this consists the talent for preaching—in God's taking a man for His instrument to move the hearts of the hearers, so that through hearing his words their illusions fall away, and they come to take account of the evil life they have led, and repent and return with all their heart to God. Father Master Avila used to say: "Preaching does not consist in your being an hour up there reasoning about God, but in your hearer's coming turned into a devil, and going away turned into an angel." In that lies the talent of a preacher. Another great servant of God used to say that, when the hearers go away from a sermon with their heads down, without speaking or looking at one another, then the sermon has been good and profitable, for that is a sign that each one is carrying away a message for himself.

In the Life of our Father Francis Borgia it is told that, when he preached in Biscay, the greater part of the people could not catch what he said, for their being very numerous and unable to get near the pulpit, as also because they did not understand the speech of Castille; but it was marvelous to see the attention which they all paid and the tears they shed. When they were asked why they cried over the sermon, seeing they could not understand it, they answered that they cried at the sight of the holy duke, and also because they felt within their souls such utterances and inspirations of God as signified and gave them to understand what the preacher was preaching to them from the pulpit. At another time, in Portugal, the cardinal infant, who was afterwards king of Portugal, wanted Father Francis to preach, and he said he was tired, having come in from a journey. "I do not ask him to preach," said the cardinal, "but only to mount the pulpit, and let them see the man who has left all he had for God." That is what preaches, that is what makes fruit in souls more than words—example and holiness of life. That is what we should secure, and on that principally insist, that God may take us for instruments for the conversion of souls—confessors as well as preachers, and all the rest of us who have to deal with our neighbor.

CHAPTER IX

Of Another Means of Helping Our Neighbor, Which Is Prayer

THE second means that our Father gives to help our neighbor is prayer. "Our neighbor is likewise helped," he says, "by our desires before God and our prayers." As this business of gaining and converting souls is supernatural, more is attained and done in it by prayers, tears, and sighs than by words and exclamations. Moses' prayer did more and bore a greater part in the victory against Amalek than all the lances and swords engaged in the fray. So long as Moses held his arms outstretched, the people of Israel were winning the fight; but when he lowered them, they were getting the worst of it. So it was necessary for two attendants to hold up his arms, one on one side and the other on the other, that they might be always held up; and so they gained the victory (Exod. xvii. 12). This was the way in which the people of God conquered their enemies. That is what the Madianites said in alarm, when they saw the great victories of the children of Israel: *This people is destined to destroy us, as the ox with its mouth bites the grass down to the roots* (Num. xxii. 4)—with its mouth; that is, with its prayers. So St. Augustine and Origen explain this passage. Now, if victory in war, to which our strength and human power may be reckoned to bear some proportion, is given by God through prayers, what must be the victory over spiritual enemies and the conversion of souls, where our means, our strength and efforts, fall so far short as to bear no proportion to so high an end! It is by prayers and sighs that we must arrange this matter with God. It is they that must appease God and win pardon and conversion.

St. Augustine very well illustrates and weighs the value and efficacy of this means, on those words of God to Moses: *Leave me, that my wrath may be enraged against them, and I may exterminate them from off the face of the earth* (Exod. xxxii. 10). When the children of Israel had adored the calf and God wished to destroy them, Moses set himself to ask God on their behalf, saying: *"Why, Lord, seekest thou to chastise thy people, whom thou hast led out of Egypt with strong and mighty arm?* See what the Egyptians will say, that for this Thou didst lead them out into those mountains and deserts, to gather them together, as they say, in the open, and destroy them there entirely. Remember, Lord, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Thy servants, to whom Thou didst promise and swear to multiply their seed as the stars of heaven and give them the Land of Promise." God answered: "Leave Me alone, for I am minded to destroy them utterly." What is this, O Lord? Why dost Thou say, *Leave Me?* Who holdeth Thee back, or can hold Thee back? Who can tie Thy hands? *Who* *hath withstood his will?* (Rom. ix. 19). What hand can be raised against Thee? What dost Thou mean by *Leave Me?* Here you see, says St. Augustine, the force of prayer, and how much it avails with God. That is what He wishes us to understand by that word, *Leave Me.* It is not a word of command; for if it were, it were ill done in the servant not to obey it. Nor is it a word of petition or request, since God has no need to petition His servant; but He wishes to give us to understand that "the prayers of the just are sufficient to resist the anger of God." St. Jerome says the same on those words in Jeremy (vii. 16): *See that I am minded to chastise this people, therefore ask thou me not on their behalf, nor intercede for them with praises and prayers; make me no resistance.* On which St. Jerome's remark is as above: *Sanctorum preces Dei irae possunt resistere.* The Prophet David clearly says the same: *And God had a mind to destroy our fathers, had not Moses, His chosen one, in the moment of destruction stood in his sight to remove his anger that he might not destroy them* (Psalm cv. 23). Moses resisted God with prayer, put himself before Him, and turned away His arm when it was about to deliver the blow. *And the Lord was appeased, and did not carry out to the end against his people the chastisement which he had said* (Exod. xxxii. 14). The like thing happened in the sedition and murmuring that the people of Israel set up against Moses and Aaron on the death of Core, Dathan, Abiron, and their followers, saying that they had been the cause thereof. God was angry with His people, and had a mind to destroy them; and the deaths among them amounted to more than fourteen thousand. Aaron thereupon put himself in prayer before God for the people, and offered incense for them, *and the plague ceased* (Num. xvi. 48). On this score the Wise Man (Wisdom xviii. 20) calls prayer a *shield.* These are his words: *But thy anger, O Lord, did not last long, for at once thy servant put himself in prayer before thee, and fought on the people's behalf* [for to pray is to fight]. *Aaron then put his hand to the shield of prayer, and therewith resisted the anger of God, and thereupon the work of death ceased.* "What a good shield is prayer," says St. Ambrose, "with which all the blows of the enemy are repelled!"

And, moreover, God is very glad when we withstand His chastisement, and someone is found to intervene to prevent it. An affectionate father, when he threatens his son with punishment, had rather not inflict it, but that someone should intervene to prevent it; and sometimes he has a previous arrangement with friends and acquaintances to hold his hand. So God, Who is more than a father and more than a mother for the great love that He bears us—as being, after all, His children, and children who have cost Him so much, seeing that we have cost Him His lifeblood—would rather not come to blows, and would be very glad if any of His friends would stand in His way. Nay, He goes to seek such, and complains bitterly when there is no one to come to the rescue. He says by the Prophet Ezechiel: *I sought someone who would put himself as a hedge before me, and withstand me, that I might not lay waste the land, and I found none* (xxii. 30); *I had none to go out to meet me, none to oppose himself as a wall and resist me in defense of the house of Israel* (xiii. 5). As a wall keeps the enemy out, and as men go forth to meet the enemy to resist him, so do the prayers of the just resist the sentence of God, His Majesty so condescending to them. The Prophet Isaias also complains bitterly of this: *Alas, O Lord, there is now none, as there used to be, to invoke thy holy name, to arise and encounter thee, and hold thee back* (Isaias lxiv. 7). There is now no Jacob to wrestle with God and hold his own arm to arm against Him, and say: *I will not let thee go until thou bless me* (Gen. xxxii. 26)—the very thing that God desires. Herein is well shown the force and efficacy of the prayers of the just, the friends of God, since they are powerful enough to restrain His arm and resist His anger. Hence will be better understood and confirmed what we said in the previous chapter, how much it makes for any help that we can render to our neighbor, to be ourselves holy and great friends of God; and how right we were in saying that a good and holy life was the chief means to that end. Anyone who would act as mediator, and effect forgivenesses and reconciliations, must by all means be a *grata persona,* standing high in favor with the person with whom he mediates; otherwise he will rather provoke anger and indignation than get pardon.

A good and holy life is so profitable for the good of our neighbor that, though we made no other prayer nor did any other thing in his service, but only took care to be ourselves very good and very holy, that alone would get them on and avail them very much. That is a marvelous story that is told by Holy Writ in Genesis. God was minded to destroy those cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their great sins. Abraham put himself in prayer before God, and said to Him: *"Wilt thou destroy the just with the impious?* (Gen. xviii. 23). That doth not seem in accordance with Thy clemency. If there be fifty just men in the city, wilt Thou not pardon the people for love of them?" The Lord said: "Certainly; if there be found fifty just men, I will pardon all for love of them." Abraham spoke once more: "As I have begun, I will go on speaking to my Lord, dust and ashes though I be. Though there be less than that, say, if there be five less, wilt Thou not pardon all for the sake of the five-and-forty just men that there are?" "Yes," said God; "if there are found forty-five just men, I will pardon all for their sakes." Abraham spoke again: "And if there be only forty just men?" "I will pardon all for their sake." "Be not angry, O Lord, if I speak once more. What if there be not found more than thirty just men, wilt Thou not pardon all for love of those thirty?" It is to be observed that, to start with, Abraham went diminishing the number quite little by little, only five at a time, and now, emboldened by the favor and kindness that he met with, he plucked up courage to diminish it ten at a time; from forty he brings it down to thirty. The Lord said: "If there be thirty just men, for love of them I will pardon all." "As I have begun, O Lord, give me leave to go on speaking. What if there be not found more than twenty just men?" "Very well; for love of them I will pardon them." "I beseech Thee, O Lord, not to be angry: this is my last word; what if there be found ten just men?" "Be it so; I am content with that," said the Lord; "if there be found ten just men among them, I will pardon them all for ten just men." They were not found, and so God destroyed those five cities. Here we see well of what use and profit for others is the good and holy life of the just. What a blessing it would have been to have had at least ten just men among them!

Another time, when God was minded to punish Jerusalem and hand the kingdom of Judah over to the Chaldeans to destroy and sack and put all to the sword, for the great sins that they had committed against His Divine Majesty, He said first by Jeremy: "Go diligently through the streets and squares of Jerusalem, and see and search carefully if you can find one just man, who does right judgment by himself and is faithful and true to his God and to his neighbor; and if you find one, for his sake I will pardon the city and the kingdom, and withdraw the chastisement and ruin that I have threatened" (Jerem. v. 1). St. Jerome had good reason to cry out on this passage and say: "See what value God sets on a just man; for not only for ten just men who should have been found in the city, as He formerly said to Abraham, but for one single just man, to be found in the midst of countless sinners, He was ready to pardon all and grant a reprieve of the punishment they deserved." Great is the love that God bears to the virtue of the just man, since for his sake He suffers and pardons so many sinners.

Good people are greatly to be respected in a community and commonwealth, and great is the good they do, even though they make it their only business to be good and virtuous. This is one of the reasons that theologians and saints advance to prove that the township owes support to religious, even though they exercise no ministry for the benefit of their neighbors, but live in recollection without going out of their corner and their cell; because from there they do a vast amount of good to the people about, and it is for the sake of these few that God endures so many evil persons in the world. This is confirmed by the parable of the Gospel, telling how, to save the wheat, the master omitted to root out the cockle. *Lest it happen that in gathering the cockle ye root out the wheat at the same time; let the one and the other grow until harvest time* (Matt. xiii. 29-30).

When God was determined to destroy with fire those cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Scripture says that He remembered His well-loved Abraham, and for love of him He delivered Lot, who was his nephew. It is to be observed that we are not told that Abraham asked God for Lot, but that, because Abraham was so much in the good graces of God, He looked after his things and all that concerned him. And God was so careful to look after Lot, Abraham's nephew, that, when he was hurrying him forth to get out of Sodom and save himself in a little town hard by, He said to him: *Make haste, and take refuge there, since I can do nothing till thou puttest thyself in a place of safety* (Gen. xix. 22). O tender mercies of our God! O infinite bounty and compassion! God says He can do nothing until you put yourself in safety. See the account that God makes of one just man, and what He says and does out of regard for him.

Do you, then, take care to be very just and very much of a friend of God, and be sure that God will look after all your affairs, and will remember your parents and your relations and friends, and all that concerns you; and that all the more, the more you neglect and forget it to take care of yourself and give yourself more to God, although you did not ask for anything in particular; for works ask and cry to God more than words. If the wickedness of the wicked man, as Holy Writ says, cries loud to God, calling for vengeance—*the voice of thy brother's blood cries to me from the earth* (Gen. iv. 10)—much more will virtue and goodness cry in still louder tones to obtain mercy in His sight, Who is such a lover of well-doing, and to Whom it is proper always to pardon and show mercy.

CHAPTER X

Of a Third Means of Doing Good to Our Neighbor, Which Is Zeal for Souls

THE zeal of thy house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me (Psalm lxviii. 10). The zeal of Thy house, O Lord, and of Thy honor and glory consumes and sets on fire my innermost heart, says the Royal Prophet, David; and the injuries and offenses done to Thee all fall upon me, and I take them as my own. This is another and quite a main means to help our neighbor; and our Father puts it among the other means that are to help to the preservation and increase of the Society and the attainment of the spiritual end for which it was instituted, which is the salvation of souls. These are his words: "A sincere zeal for souls, to the glory of Him Who has created and redeemed them, overriding the consideration of any other gain"—*quovis alio emolumento posthabito.* And the blessed St. Augustine, in his "Exhortation to a Certain Count," says: "O my brother, is our flesh of iron that it does not tremble, is our heart of adamant that it is not softened, or at least awakened, at those words which Christ our Redeemer will say to the wicked at the day of judgment: *Depart from me,* *ye cursed, into everlasting fire!* Why do we not say with the Prophet Jeremy: *Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, to weep day and night over the slain of my people!* (Jerem. ix. 1)" Their eyes are worn out with weeping who consider the deaths, not of the bodies, but of the souls, of their brethren. What lamentation is better bestowed than theirs who feel and bewail with the Apostle St. Paul the loss of souls: *Who is weak and I am not weak?* (II Cor. xi. 29). Let us learn from the Apostle, says the glorious Augustine, to have this great zeal and desire for the salvation of souls, since God Himself has loved them so far as to *spare not his own Son, but give him up to death for us all* (Rom. viii. 32). He gave him up for us all. *For all,* he says, that we may not make light of the salvation of anyone, since everyone has cost God His lifeblood.

This zeal for souls, or to say better, for the honor and glory of God, is a fire of love for God; it is an ardent and inflamed desire for all men greatly to love, honor, and serve God; and he who has it would fain make this desire and this fire be enkindled and seize upon all men, and does all in his power to bring that about. And when he sees God offended and injured and is unable to stop it, he groans and laments; and this fire eats him up and wastes away and consumes his flesh. Such was the zeal that those great saints and friends of God had, as the Prophet Jeremy, who says (xx. 9): "There in my heart and in my bones there raged a fire, which burned and consumed me, seeing the offenses committed against the majesty of God, and I could not endure it." And again Elias: *Zeal for the Lord God of hosts set me on fire, because the children of Israel have forsaken the covenant* (III Kings xix. 14). And the Royal Prophet, David, was full of it: *Faintness seized me on account of sinners who forsake thy law. Zeal for thy honor hath wasted me away, because mine enemies have despised thy words* (Psalm cxviii. 53, 139). So great was the pain and affliction that those saints felt at seeing sinners so recklessly breaking the law of God, that for grief of soul their body was wasted away, and their blood curdled and was poisoned, and their whole outer man gave signs of it. *I saw the transgressors and I wasted away, for that they kept not thy commandments* (Psalm cxviii. 158). So severely was the Prophet David burned and consumed by this fire that he was moved and melted away to tears. *My eyes were as fountains of tears, because they kept not thy law* (Psalm cxviii. 136). That is, *by reason of them that kept not thy law,* as another translation has it. As when they light an alembick or still, so did he melt into tears, seeing the offenses committed against the majesty of God. We should have this zeal for the honor of God, and this should be the greatest of our solicitudes, to see the honor of God prospered and promoted, His name hallowed and glorified, His most holy will done on earth as it is done in heaven; and the greatest of our griefs should be to see that it is not so done, but quite the contrary. This, says the glorious St. Augustine, is to have zeal for the honor of God. He is on fire and consumed with zeal for the honor of God who desires and tries to remedy all the evils that he sees; and when he cannot remedy them, groans and weeps, as Samuel did for Saul: *And Samuel mourned for Saul, because God had repented of having made him King of Israel* (I Kings xv. 35).

This zeal for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls is one of the things that are most pleasing to God of all that we can do in His service, or even the most of all. So says St. Gregory: "There is no sacrifice so pleasing to God as zeal for the salvation of souls." St. Chrysostom says the same, and so do many saints. The reason of it is that nothing pleases God more than charity, which is the greatest of virtues, as St. Paul says (I Cor. xiii. 13); in that consists perfection, and so he calls it *the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14); the tie and crossbeam of perfection, because it is that which joins and unites us to God. Now this zeal is a great and excellent love of God, for, not content with itself loving and serving God all it can, it desires that all men should be taken up with His love and serve Him, and that His holy name be known, reverenced, glorified, and exalted by all, and the kingdom of God extended and amplified. This is all its joy and satisfaction, and the offenses and sins committed against God pierce it to the quick. And as a good son who greatly loves his father greatly desires his honor and advancement, and all his joy is to see his father honored and exalted, and the injuries and offenses done him he feels as his own, and more than his own, so is he who has this zeal for the honor of God. So great is the love that he bears to his Lord, and so fervent his desire that His Divine Majesty be praised and honored by all, that this is all his delight and joy; and his greatest pain and grief is to see the great forgetfulness that there is of God on earth, and the offenses and injuries done Him. And so this is a great and excellent act of the love of God.

It is also a very great and very excellent act of love of our neighbor; because, as love of God is shown in our rejoicing in His greater honor and glory and resenting the offenses committed against Him, so also true love of our neighbor is shown in our rejoicing at his good, and being afflicted at his true evils, which are his sins, and seeking to hinder them to the best of our power. And so the saints say: Whoever wishes to examine whether he bears love to his neighbor, let him see whether he bewails his faults and rejoices in his graces and spiritual improvement. This is the proof of true love of your brother, that you rejoice at his good as at your own and feel his affliction and misfortune as if it were yours. This is loving your neighbor as yourself, as St. Paul did when he said: *Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I am not on fire?* (II Cor. xi. 29). The gloss there says: "Who falls into any sin, and it does not go to my heart? Who suffers any annoyance, and I am not full of compassion for him as though it were my own?"

This is so pleasing to God that St. Chrysostom says that, though you were to do great penances, fast all your life and sleep on the ground, and give all your substance to the poor, that bears no comparison with this zeal for the conversion of souls. As much as the soul is better and more precious than the body, so much more do they whose occupation it is to help and heal souls by confession, preaching, advising, and other spiritual works of mercy, than others who busy themselves remedying bodily needs or giving great alms out of their possessions. How satisfied would you feel if you had given many a thousand guineas in alms! But it is more and goes for more to busy yourself in helping the salvation of souls. St. Chrysostom adds that zeal for souls is worth more before God than working miracles; since Moses worked many wonderful miracles in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, but for all that he did nothing equal to the zeal and fervent charity with which he interceded with God, saying: *Lord, either pardon this people their sin, or blot me out of thy book* (Exod. xxxii. 31-32). St. Chrysostom says this was the greatest feat that Moses ever did, though he had done so many wonderful things.

CHAPTER XI

What an Efficacious Means This Zeal Is for Helping and Improving Our Neighbor

THIS zeal is a grand and very effectual means of helping our neighbor. In the first place, because it is a fire, as we have said. As fire is very active, and works to convert all things into itself, actually doing so if the material be disposed thereto, and if not, proceeding so to dispose it;

so, if this fire and zeal of love of God is burning in our hearts, we shall thereupon communicate it to others, and set them on fire with love of God, and convert them into ourselves, making them be as we are, as St. Paul said: *I would have you all be as I am* (Acts xxvi. 29); and while they are not, we shall dispose them to be so. Charity stands not idle, since it is a fire that never rests, but is always crackling. "Charity is ever at work on great things," says St. Gregory; "if it is not working such things, either it will not be at all, or anyhow it will not be great charity."

In the second place, this zeal is a main means of helping our neighbor, inasmuch as the outcome of it is a great application to our ministries, and a constant desire and seeking of occupation in aid of our neighbor, so that there is no need to bring us up to the mark by force—a thing that we should be ashamed to require, as we should always be found standing in readiness and desiring to do far more than we get a chance of doing. This goes for much, since it is clear that we do twice as much work when we go at it with great zest. This zeal, then, is of great consequence, that we may look alive, and not be as dead men.

In the third place, there springs from this zeal the seeking of means to help our neighbor, and the finding of them, too, since good will is a great inventor and finder of means to gain its end. St. Bonaventure says there is no fear of him who has this zeal not finding what to do in aid of his neighbor, or not finding the means of doing it. If he finds nothing to do in the house, he will go and seek it outside; if he does not find it where he sought it, he will go to the hospital or the prison, where he will be sure to find it. Workers who have this zeal will always find something to do. Therefore Scripture calls them sometimes *hunters*. *I will send them many hunters* to follow the game in the glens and warrens; *and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and every hillside, and from the caverns of the rocks,* says God by Jeremy (xvi. 16). At other times it calls them *fishers,* for the fisherman does not wait for the fish to come to his hand, but goes to seek them, and plies them with divers manners of gins and dainty bait. Now since the devil is so diligent in the ruin of souls, it is only right that we should be the like to save them.

In the fourth place, where this zeal is, everything becomes easy, all difficulties are overcome, no labor stands in the way. St. Denis the Areopagite seems to attribute to this zeal the way that Christ our Redeemer bore with such constancy and fortitude the labors and sufferings of His Passion. He says that the indignation which He conceived against sin helped Him in this conflict, and quotes to this effect the text of the Prophet Isaias: *I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the nations there is not a man with me: I have trodden them down in my fury, and trampled on them in my anger; and my very indignation hath aided me* to come out victorious (Isaias lxiii. 3, 5). It was the indignation and anger that He conceived against sin, he says, that aided Him.

In the fifth place, from this zeal there springs also fervent prayer, which does not let go of God until it has carried its purpose; as we read of many saints who interposed as mediators between God and His people, and ceased not and rested not until they had appeased God by prayer. Of our blessed Father Ignatius it is recounted in his Life that there was a man in Paris carrying on an intrigue with a woman with whom he was desperately in love. As Ignatius could find no way of stopping this, he set himself to wait for him one day outside the city; and, knowing that he must pass close by a pond or pool of water on his way to the place whither his blind and foul passion was carrying him, Ignatius went into the icy-cold water up to his shoulders; and when he saw him passing by, he cried out to him aloud: "Go, misguided lad, go and enjoy your filthy gratification. Do you not see the anger of God ready to strike you? Are you not afraid of hell, open-mouthed to devour you? of the scourge that awaits you, soon to come down in full force upon you? Go, for here I will be suffering and doing penance for you, until God in His mercy abates the just punishment that He has prepared for you." The man stood still, dumbfounded at such an example of charity; and, smitten by the hand of God with shame and amazement, he turned back and gave up the shameful and dangerous attachment that held him captive.

CHAPTER XII

Of Three Things That Will Help Us to Have This Zeal

BESIDES what has been said, three things especially will be a great help to us to have this zeal and to desire and work diligently for the salvation of souls. The first and chiefest will be the great love and regard that the Son of God had for souls, since He gave His lifeblood for them and thought it well spent. The blood of Christ on the earth is a great sign of the value of a soul, of the regard that God has for it, and of the love that He bears it. This is what should move and animate us ever to go about our ministries with zeal and solicitude, and to make our heart go out to souls and the care of their salvation. *The love of Christ urgeth us on,* as St. Paul said (II Cor. v. 14), continually soliciting and compelling us to this end. How shall we not give our blood for him for whom the Son of God gave His? How shall we not give our life in His cause, Who died to give us life? How is it tolerable that God shall have died for a soul and I see that soul going to perdition and falling into hell, while I might help it and do not? Charity cannot endure such a thing. Our heart should go out to souls, and this should be the greatest of our cares, as it was of the Apostle St. Paul. Amid all the exterior afflictions which he suffered, which were very great, what gave him most concern and pressed heaviest upon him was his solicitude for the churches and for souls.

St. Augustine on those words: *Jesus, fatigued with his journey, sat down, a weary man, by the fountain* (John iv. 6), quotes also another passage from St. Matthew (xxiii. 37): *How often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not,* and says that Christ is very aptly likened to a hen. As for other birds, you would not know them for mothers, nor for having young, except when you see them sitting; but when the hen has chickens she looks so thin and worn out, droops her wings so, her feathers stand so on end, her note is so hoarse, the bird is so out of condition and languishing that, even though there were no chickens following her, you could tell at once that she is a mother. So, says St. Augustine, went Christ our Redeemer on His quest for souls, worn out, weary, and tired. So, then, we should have such zeal for souls, and be so careful and anxious to rear spiritual children that it should render us enfeebled, exhausted, and forgetful of all our own comforts, as we see in Christ that, though worn out with His journey and hunger, He nevertheless refused to eat, making more account of the salvation of souls than of the nourishment necessary for His own body. So, when His disciples bade Him eat, He replied: *I have other food to eat that ye know not of: lift up your eyes and see the fields, white and ready for the harvest* (John iv. 32, 35); soon you will see the Samaritans come and be converted. This is My food, the conversion of souls. The same also ought to be ours.

Father Master Avila makes a good reflection to move us to this zeal. He says that, though on the one hand it is quite true that God seeks and requires no return for the favors that He does us, because what He gives, He gives for pure love; still, looking at the matter another way, there is nothing that He gives for which He does not expect a return; not for any profit of His own, since He is the rich and thrice-wealthy Lord of all things and has need of nothing, but for the profit of our neighbors, who are in need of being loved and helped. He illustrates this by a good comparison. It is as when one man has lent another large sums of money and done him many other good turns, and says to him: "Of all that I have done for you I have need of nothing. All the right and claim I have upon you, I cede and transfer to the person of So-and-So, who is in need, or is my relation or servant; give him what you owe me, and thereby I take myself as paid." This is the way in which we should regard our neighbor. We should enter into an account with God, and consider the vast benefits that we have received at His hand: how He has created me and redeemed me with His own blood; also the particular benefits that He has done me, not punishing me for my sins, bringing me to repentance in hope, rendering me good for evil, and other countless favors that I cannot record. Thereupon we should reckon that all these debts and bonds God cedes and makes over to our neighbor, and professes Himself paid by the service and good works that we do for Him. In this way will zeal and love of our neighbors burn in our heart; on the one hand we consider them as adopted sons of God and brethren of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, Who has given His lifeblood for them; and on the other, we view them as creditors to whom God has ceded and made over the heavy debt that we owe Him for the great and countless favors that He has done us.

It will also be a great help to us to consider that one of the best means that we can take to make satisfaction for the many offenses that we have committed against God, will be to help and be instrumental to others' ceasing to offend Him and coming to serve Him henceforth in earnest, according to that saying of the Apostle St. James: *He that shall convert a sinner from the error of his ways, shall deliver his own soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins* (James v. 20). St. Augustine observes this well on that passage of St. Luke, when Christ our Redeemer cured the man of the legion of devils that tormented him. The Sacred Text says that, seeing himself cured, he wished to remain with Christ in gratitude for the benefit received; and the Lord would not agree to that, but bade him go and preach and publish the favors that He had done him. *Return to thy house, and relate all the things that the Lord hath done for thee.* And so he did. *And he went all through the city, telling what Jesus had done for him* (Luke viii. 39). This is what the Lord asks of you in return and recompense for the blessing that He has bestowed on you in drawing you out of the world, out of so many sins and dangers as there are in it, that you help others to get out of sin and serve God with their whole heart.

CHAPTER XIII

What Is the Good and True Zeal That Pleases God, and What Not

THERE are apparent virtues that are not true virtues, but false and pretended, as the Wise Man says of humility: *There is one who humbleth himself cunningly, and his interior is full of guile* (Ecclus. xix. 23). There are those who appear humble, and are not. They wear poor clothes, walk with their heads down and their eyes on the ground, speak in a humble tone, heave many a sigh, and call themselves miserable sinners at every breath; but give them a flick with a slight word, and they at once let it be seen what they are within, for all that exterior was a vain show and a make-up. So the Apostle says that there are certain sorts of zeal that appear good, and yet are not good, but indiscreet. *They have zeal, but not according to knowledge* (Rom. x. 2). Such was the zeal of the disciples of Christ, St. James and St. John, when, seeing that the Samaritans would not receive them, they waxed mighty wroth and said: *Lord, shall we bid fire come down from heaven, and burn and consume them all?* So the Redeemer of the world chid them, saying: *Ye know not of what spirit ye are.* You know not the spirit of the law of grace, which does not consist of severities and chastisements. *The Son of Man came not to destroy men, but to save them* (Luke ix. 54-56). In order, then, that we may not go astray in a matter of so much importance, we will here explain what is the zeal that is not according to knowledge, and what is good and pleasing to God, that we may make sure of the one and avoid the other.

St. Denis the Areopagite treats this point very well. He says that, though blind men do not hit the road nor know where to go, and yet we do not beat them on that account nor get angry with them, but rather take them by the hand and guide them, having compassion on them; so we should behave to sinners, who are ignorant and blind, as the Prophet Sophonias says: *They shall walk as blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord* (Soph. i. 17). We should not be minded at once to beat them, or see them chastised or destroyed, but compassionate them, and teach them the way of truth, and guide and help them with great love and charity in imitation of Christ our Redeemer, Who went on the hills to seek the strayed and lost sheep, calling and whistling for it; and on finding it did not take the stick to it, but took it on His shoulders and brought it to His flock (Luke xv. 3-7). See it in the case of the prodigal son, how He behaved to him, and the loving-kindness with which He received him. This is the zeal that is good and according to God; other zeals and outbursts of indignation against sinners are not good, nor pleasing to God, because they are not to His nature nor according to His heart.

St. Dionysius relates to this purpose an instance, very good and very consoling, of what happened to St. Carpus, a man of many revelations, who never came to offer the

Holy Sacrifice without first getting a revelation to do so. He says that this saint told him this story. There was a recent convert to the faith of Jesus Christ, whom an unbeliever had perverted. Carpus was so pained and saddened at this that for grief he fell ill. This was in the evening. Midnight approached, at which time it was his custom to rise and praise God. He rose accordingly, full of zeal and indignation against the two of them; at the unbeliever for having perverted the new Christian; and at the Christian for having reverted to his unbelief. Putting himself in prayer, he began to complain to God, saying: "It is not just that the wicked should live; how long art Thou going to endure them? Send, Lord, fire from heaven to consume them." While he was at this, there seemed to come an earthquake which shook the whole house. The ground opened from above downwards on two sides, and he saw a huge fire that reached from there up to heaven. Above, on the other side, there in heaven, he saw Jesus Christ accompanied by innumerable angels; and, looking down below, he saw the earth yawning open, and a deep and dark gulf that reached down to hell, at which he stood horrified and amazed. The story goes on that there appeared those two men, the objects of his indignation, standing close to that opening in the earth, trembling and on the point of falling in; and that there came out from below fiery serpents, who sometimes twined and coiled themselves round their feet, and at other times with their teeth and horrid aspects and wrigglings tried to make them fall into the abyss. There were black men also among the serpents, endeavoring to do the same, sometimes throwing things at them, sometimes pushing them. And St. Carpus went on to say that, as he had been so indignant against them and had asked God to send down fire from heaven to consume them, he now rejoiced to see them in this danger, and was only sorry and much annoyed that they did not once for all fall in—in fact, he thought he would have been glad to have gone and given them a push. Upon this, he raised his eyes to heaven, and saw the most merciful Jesus giving signs of compassion for them and for the great danger they were in. He rose from His heavenly throne and, accompanied by the angels, descended to the spot where these wretches were, and gave them His hand to draw them out of that danger, and the angels received them into their company. Jesus Christ turned to St. Carpus, who was longing to give them a push that they might fall altogether, and said to him: "Put out thy hand and strike Me, since I am ready once more to suffer and die for sinners. Does it not seem to thee to be better to be in the company of angels than in the company of serpents and devils?" With that the vision disappeared, and the holy man stood corrected for his indiscreet zeal, and taught better in future—and we with him—to understand that these outbursts of zeal do not please God, Who wishes not the death of the sinner, sinners having cost Him much, and being His *Benjamins, the sons of His pain* (Gen. xxxv. 18). In great pains did He beget them on the Cross; they cost Him His lifeblood, and so He would not have them perish, but be converted and live forever.

The Prophet Jonah was very grieved and put out that God did not send upon the Ninevites the punishment that he had prophesied. And God said to him: "Thinkest thou that this is a good zeal? Thou art grieved that the ivy is dried up, at which thou didst not work, for the little shade it gave thee; and shall I not grieve on My own account at the destruction of a city, in which the children alone who have not come to the age of reason exceed one hundred and twenty thousand?" (Jon. iv. 9-11). That is also a marvelous utterance to this effect, which was spoken by the Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nice to a bishop named Acacius, who had shown himself very hard in admitting to the council those who had erred and were converted. The most religious and pious emperor said to him: "O Acacius, get a ladder, and climb up to heaven alone, if you can." Another holy man in another similar case said to one who was showing great severity: "If this man had cost you your blood, as he has cost Christ, you would pick him up and receive him into your flock, and not leave him outside to be devoured by wolves."

In Exodus Holy Scripture gives us a marvelous example and pattern of good and true zeal such as God's servants should have. Our zeal should be such as Moses had when the children of Israel made the calf and worshipped it for an idol. St. Augustine makes very good reflection on this. Moses had gone up the mountain to receive from God the law which he was to give to the people, and had now received it on two tables, made by the hand of God and written also by His hand on both sides. He came down from the mountain and found that the people had made the calf and were adoring it. Whereupon he grew so angry that he broke to pieces the tables which he held in his hands. See, says St. Augustine, how angry Moses was at the sin of the people, since he broke the tables of the law which he had just received from God, made and written by God's own hand, and given with such solemnity and such great preparations, after having been forty days and forty nights on the mountain, fasting and conversing with God. But, though his anger and indignation against the sin was so great, nevertheless he returned at once to God to intercede for the people, and that with such persistence as to beg God either to pardon them or blot him out of His book. Of this sort, says the saint, should be the zeal of the true ministers of God. We should be so zealous for His honor that the offenses committed against His Divine Majesty should pierce us to the quick; and on the other hand be so full of compassion and pity for sinners as to put ourselves for mediators to appease God and obtain their pardon, as Moses did.

The like example we read also of the Apostle St. Paul.

I tell the truth in Christ Jesus, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I suffer great sadness and continued grief in my heart; for I should wish to be anathema from Christ for the salvation of my brethren, the children of Israel, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. ix. 1-3). On the one hand the Apostle felt such great sadness and grief for the sins of his people, because he felt such great hatred and abhorrence for sin; and on the other he felt so great compassion and such desire of their good that he says he desired to be anathema for their salvation. The saints give many explanations of this desire of Moses and of St. Paul. St. Jerome explains it is to be understood of the death of the body. He says that these holy men desired to shed their blood and die the death of the body that the others might be alive in the spirit and be saved. St. Jerome proves that the word *anathema* is often used in Holy Writ for the death of the body. But, leaving out other explanations, the glorious Bernard gives one very tender and touching, as he usually does. He says that Moses speaks there with the affection and love of a father, or, to put it better, of a most loving mother, who can never be satisfied to see her children left out in the cold, not to share her joys. He illustrates this by an example. Suppose a rich man to give an invitation to a poor woman, and say to her: "You come and dine with me; but as for that infant in arms that you have got, you must leave him outside, because he will give us trouble with his crying." Think you that woman would accept the invitation under that condition? No, certainly not. She would rather go without her dinner than make such a bargain. "Either he must come in there with me," she would say, "or if not, I decline your invitation." In this way, then, Moses speaks, says St. Bernard. "I have no mind to enter into the joy of the Lord, and leave out in the cold the people of Israel," whom he loved as his children.

This affection of a mother, this heart of compassion and love, are very pleasing to God; and our zeal ought to be of this sort. One of the virtues that best find a place in anyone who is working for God is this compassion for souls who are under the thralldom of the devil. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *Put ye on hearts of mercy, as becometh the elect of God, holy and well-beloved* (Col. iii. 12), to fall in well with the likeness of the nature of God, and of that great High Priest Whom He has given us, of Whom the Apostle says: *We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities* (Heb. iv. 15). Let us have compassion on our neighbor, as Christ has had compassion on us. St. Ambrose in the second book of his treatise on penance asks nothing else of God but that He would give him this tender compassion for sinners. And He did give it to him in such abundance, as Paulinus writes of him in his Life, that he wept with those who came to confession to him and declared to him their miseries. Penitents are better won over in this way than by severity and indiscreet zeal; for the love that the confessor shows the penitent, compassionating him and feeling his affliction and misery, wins his heart and greatly moves him to love also his confessor and be very fond of him, for there is nothing that moves one more to love than to see oneself loved. Anything that you say to him on this footing of love makes an impression on his heart; and though you rebuke him in this manner, he does not grow angry, because he takes the rebuke as coming from a true father. So St. Basil says that all our rebukes ought to be in the style of a mother caressing the child at her breast—*tanquam si nutrix foveat filios suos* (I Thess. ii. 7); so that the party rebuked may take it that the words come from a heart that loves him and desires his welfare and salvation. This is to know how to mingle oil and wine as the holy Gospel says in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 34), how to mingle and temper the strong wine of reprehension with the soft and sweet oil of compassion and mercy. This is the right way to cure and heal wounds; whereas that other method of severe and harsh indignation and scolding not only does no good, but positively does harm, and alienates penitents not only from you, but from the Society, because they take it that all the rest of us are as ungracious and ill-tempered as you are. St. Bernard quotes to this purpose the example of Joseph, who in rebuking his brethren could not restrain his tears. He showed clearly that his words of fault-finding did not spring from anger and indignation, but from a tender and loving heart.

To have such a heart and such affections of tenderness and compassion for the sins of our neighbor, and not be indignant nor angry with him on that account, Father Master Avila alleges a consideration that will be very helpful. Our neighbor's sins may be looked at in two ways. First, as offenses and injuries done to God; and in that way they move to anger and indignation and desire of punishment. Secondly, as the calamity of our brother; and, looked at in that way, they do not move to anger, but to compassion; for no evil can come upon men that does them so much harm as sin, and so there is no more proper matter for compassion and mercy than guilt, regarded in that light. And the greater the sin, the more it calls for compassion, as doing the more harm and being the greater evil. As the injurious and bad language of a madman does not move us to anger, but to pity and compassion, since we regard it as the misfortune and infirmity of him who says such things, so God Himself is moved by our sins to compassion and not to anger when He takes a merciful view of them, not as an offense against Himself, but as our calamity and misery. In this way we should regard the sins of our neighbor as his calamity and loss, to compassionate them, as we would wish God to regard our sins, not with anger and justice to punish us, but with mercy and compassion to pardon and heal us. This will make a good zeal, a zeal according to the heart of God, Who is merciful and a doer of mercies.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Another Means to Do Our Ministrations Well Is to Keep Our Eyes on the Soul That Makes the Inner Man, and Not on Outward and Exterior Appearances

ONE of the chief warnings that saints and masters of spiritual life give to those who have to deal with their neighbor, is to keep their eyes on souls and not on bodies nor outward appearances. There are some, says St. Bernard, who look at the exterior, and fix their eyes on the well-featured and clean-limbed, on the well-dressed and well-groomed—these are their favorites and they delight in dealing with such; but those who make a wholesome use of their eyes look only at the interior of the soul, which is not more beautiful in a beautiful than in an ugly body, unless in that beautiful body there be a more beautiful soul than in the ugly one. But be the person ugly or beautiful, the soul is most beautiful if it is not befouled with sin; and the purer and clearer it is of sins, the more beautiful it is and the more adorned with virtues and heavenly gifts. Of no profit is the visible beauty of the body if the invisible beauty of the soul is wanting; the one is common to us with inanimate things and brute animals, but the other we share with the angels. We ought, says St. Bernard, to go there within and fix our eyes on the soul, which is made in the image and likeness of the most holy Trinity, and consider it as a living temple of the Holy Ghost and a member of Christ all bathed, as it were, in His blood, bought and redeemed at the price of His life. We should condole with it if we see it disfigured and befouled with sin, and feel great sentiment of compassion if we see thrown away upon it the price so dear which it has cost the Son of God. As for the body and all the outward man, we should keep off from it as much as is possible, and make no more account of it than of a sack of dung, a bag of uncleanness and a dunghill covered with snow, or a sepulcher whited outside, for such is our body. And to such a degree do our instructors wish this to be observed, and with such care and caution would they have us walk that, as Gerson says, we should not notice whether the penitent or the person we are speaking to has agreeable features or the reverse, nor reflect whether it be man or woman, but fix our eyes on souls alone and their cure, abstracting from all the rest and making no account of it, for these differences do not affect souls.

This advice is of much importance; in the first place, because in this way our love will be spiritual, true charity in God and for God and unto God alone; the other is a carnal and sensual love, and very dangerous. In the second place, this advice is also very important to those of us who have to deal with our neighbor, to encourage us in our functions to exercise them as we ought, giving as hearty welcome to the poor and destitute as to the rich and powerful; seeing that the poor man in the workhouse, and the ragged beggar who comes to confession, has cost God as much for his soul as the knight and the well-dressed visitor. St. Ambrose quotes to this purpose the example of Christ our Redeemer, of Whom we read (John iv. 47) that He would not go to the house of the ruler to cure his son—though the father asked him, and had come in person with this request—that He might not seem to be moved by the fact that both the sick man and he who brought the request were persons of wealth and position. On the other hand we see that He offered to go to the house of the centurion to cure a servant of his, though the centurion had not come himself with the request, but had used the mediation of others (Luke vii. 2-6), that He might not seem to be disdaining to visit the sick person because he was a poor youth. This to give us an example, says St. Ambrose, how to behave with our neighbor, not paying regard to the rich, nor the well-born, nor the well-dressed, but to souls alone.

Our eyes and our heart should overlook this distinction of classes, welcoming as heartily the poor man and the stable-boy and the slave as the knight and the lord; since before God bondman and freeman, servant and master, are all one, as St. Paul says (Gal. iii. 28); God died for the one as for the other, and very possibly loves and values the beggar more than the grandee.

If our love be quite pure and spiritual, we shall be inclined more to converse with the poor than with the rich, with the lowly than with the great, and that for many reasons. First, to copy the example which Christ our Redeemer gave us, as we have said. Secondly, because in these poor humble folk there better shines forth the image of Christ, *who being rich made himself poor for our sakes, to enrich us with his poverty,* as the Apostle says (II Cor. viii. 9). Thirdly, because in this way we are safer and surer of seeking God in our ministries and doing them purely for Him. In dealing with persons of quality and distinction, human considerations very often come in and we seek ourselves and our own tastes and credit. These transactions are not so safe, nor always so pure and clear of dust and chaff; sometimes that is vanity which has the appearance of zeal. Fourthly, because thus we keep ourselves better in humility. Fifthly, because it is seen by experience that more good is done with the one class of folk than with the other; the poor are they who frequent the confessional and attend better at sermons; and so we see that even with Christ our Redeemer the poor were they who followed Him most and profited most by His doctrine. *The poor have the gospel preached to them,* says the holy Gospel (Matt. xi. 5). Of the wealthy and leading men there came one here and there, such as Nicodemus, who was a leader among the Jews; and even of him the Apostle St. John says that he came to see Jesus Christ secretly and by night (John iii. 2).

Another thing, to simple folk we tell home truths more plainly, and rebuke what is amiss in them with greater liberty, and they take it better. It is easier for a confessor to do what he wishes with them; whereas with men of rank there has to be sometimes some drawing in; the confessor does not dare to say so much to them, and purses his lips to tell them what is necessary, and is often left with scruples and remorse of conscience for not having spoken more plainly and having humored them and temporized with them too much. Again, great people take up a deal of your time, and in that time there is little or no good done; but with simple folk much is done in a short time, because there and then you can come to the point with them, and the whole conversation turns on what really matters, which is not the case with the others. On this account spiritual men, men detached from the world, lovers of their own spiritual progress and anxious to do real good to other people, do their best to avoid all dealings with lords and grandees, reckoning their company for a nuisance. So the saints often advise us, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *He takes a burden on himself, who deals with the high and mighty* (Ecclus. xiii. 2). So we see that in religion they are much valued and esteemed, and with good reason, who set themselves to hear the confessions of the poor and the black man, and servants and ragged beggars. I'll warrant you that the others will never want a confessor; and if it happen that there be anyone of whom you think that any kind turn done to him would make much for the service of God, you, if you are humble, should think that some other father of those who hear confessions in the church will do the job better than you and with less danger to himself; and do you meanwhile lend a hand to that poor man who possibly has been up several times and has had to go away without confession.

CHAPTER XV

Of Another Means of Helping Our Neighbor, Which Is to Abandon All Confidence in Ourselves and Put Our Whole Trust in God

HAVE confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not on thine own prudence (Prov. iii. 5). Another and quite a main means that will help us greatly in attaining the end of our institute, is what the Wise Man says here, and our Father also lays it down, and so does the bull of our institute: "Distrusting their own strength, and confiding in that of God." Do you know, it says, how to make great gain and do great good to souls? Distrust yourself, your own strength, prudence, and industry, and all human means, and put all your confidence in God. This is one of the chiefest and most effectual means for producing fruit in souls; so it is one of the best dispositions that a workman in God's vineyard can have to understand that of himself he can do nothing that is of any good, and so to place his entire trust in God. These are the sort of men whom our sovereign Lord uses as instruments to do great things by them, and to work great and marvelous conversions. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *We have confidence through Christ in God; not that we are sufficient to do anything of ourselves, not so much as to have one good thought; but our whole sufficiency must come of God, who hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament* (II Cor. iii. 4-6). St. Augustine, referring to the praise that Christ Himself bestowed on Nathaniel: *Behold a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile* (John i. 47), says: "One would have thought that a man like that should have been called to the apostolate first of all, since the Son of God bears him such witness; yet we see that he was not called first, nor midway, nor last. What can be the reason of this? Nathaniel [or Nicodemus: John iii. 1, 10*] was a learned man, a doctor of the law, and therefore he was not chosen to the apostolate, because Christ was not minded to choose doctors to preach His Gospel and convert the world, but poor fishermen, unlettered, common men. *The weak things of this world hath God chosen* (I Cor. i. 27.)

St. Gregory alleges to this purpose the story in the Book of Kings (I Kings xxx.). When the Amalekites set fire to Siceleg, and led away into captivity David's women and those of his companions, and their children, one of them left behind on the road an Egyptian servant because he had fallen sick and could not follow. David met with this poor sick man, almost on the point of expiring because he had been three days and three nights without eating or drinking. David gave him food, and brought him round, and took him for a guide on the way, and by his guidance tracked the Amalekites and found them eating and making good cheer with much feasting and rejoicing. He fell upon them and slew them and recovered the booty that they had made. This, says St. Gregory, is the behavior of the true David, Christ our Redeemer, Who gathers the forlorn outcasts of the world, brings them back to their right senses with the food of His word, and uses them for His guides, making them preachers of His Gospel, to overcome and destroy the Amalekites, that is, worldlings, who feast and make merry, entertaining themselves with the delights and pastimes of the world.

But let us see why God acts thus and why He chooses weak instruments for so lofty an undertaking. The Apostle tells us (I Cor. i. 29-31) it is that man may not trust in himself nor take occasion to attribute anything to himself, but may put all his confidence in God, attribute all to Him, and give Him the glory of all. God sets much store by this; and that we may have this truth well brought home to us, and hold it fixed and stamped on our hearts, we find Holy Writ full of instances of God's choosing weak instruments for the doing of great things, since in this way it is better understood that it is He Who does them, and not we. This redounds to the greater glory of God, and in this way His greatness and omnipotence become more evident. Many were the wonders that God wrought by means of Moses in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, but in none of them did the Egyptians better come to know the might and power of God than when Moses struck the dust of the earth with his rod and converted it into gnats, and covered the whole land with them. Then Pharaoh's magicians, after trying all their arts and enchantments, confessed that they could not do that, and said, *The finger of God is here* (Exod. viii. 19); this is the finger of God and a sensible sign of His great might and power. In the war that Sapor, King of the Persians, waged against the Romans, he had besieged with a huge army the city of Nisibis, which some call the Antioch of Migdonia. The bishop of the city was a holy man named James. The Church history relates that the citizens begged this holy man to come to the ramparts and from thence curse the army of the enemy. At their request the venerable bishop mounted a tower, and saw thousands of people on whom he imprecated no other curse, nor asked God for any other calamity to fall upon them, than fleas and mosquitoes, that, worn out by these vile little insects, they might recognize the sovereign power of the Almighty. No sooner had he finished his prayer than there came down upon the Persians hosts of fleas and mosquitoes. They filled to swelling the trunks of the elephants, and the nostrils and ears of the horses and other animals in the army. Unable to stand the stings of these little creatures, they pranced and upset the men they were carrying, flung their drivers to the ground and broke their necks, and, running wildly, they routed the battalions and all the goodly array of the army. In this way King Sapor came to recognize the power of God and the providence which He exercises over His own. He raised the siege and went back to his own land, mortified and ashamed. With fleas and mosquitoes God can make war on all the emperors and monarchs of the world; and so He chose to do in this case, the better to make it appear that it was He Who did it, that so it might redound to His greater glory and honor. To this same purpose God chooses also weak means and instruments to do high things for the conversion of souls. In Church histories we have many examples of conversions of great sinners, infidels and heretics, whom many bishops and many very learned men had been unable to convert in general councils where was gathered the flower and cream of the Church; and at the end of it all they came to be converted by means of a plain, unlearned man, and by very ordinary and simple words, that so we may learn to distrust ourselves and trust in God, and give Him the glory of it all.

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*Nathaniel Bar Tholomaeus, St. Bartholomew probably.

Hence we must draw three lessons. The first is, not to be discouraged or lose heart at seeing our poverty and misery, and the small store of ability that we have for so high an end and institute and the exalted functions that we have in the Society; but rather to take thence occasion to encourage ourselves and have more confidence in God, since this is His way, to take such instruments to do by their means great and wonderful things. That was the very good answer which the blessed St. Francis made to his companion on this matter. It is related in his chronicles how Friar Maseo, the constant companion of St. Francis, was minded one day to test the humility of the saint. Understanding and knowing full well his relish and desire of being slighted, he went up to him and said to him: "Tell me, whence is it that all the world runs after you, all want to see and hear you and do your bidding? You are not learned, you are not high-born, you are not handsome, you are not an eloquent man; whence comes it that all the world runs after you?" St. Francis replied, like the true humble man that he was: "Would you know, my brother, whence it is to me that all the world is on my track? From the immense goodness of God, Who has cast His eyes on me, the greatest sinner, the greatest simpleton, the vilest creature of all that there are in the world. It is because God chooses the weak and simple things of the world, thereby to confound the great and powerful, that all the glory and honor be to God, and no creature may be able to glory in His sight (I Cor. i. 27-29), but he that glorieth may glory in the Lord, and to Him alone be given glory and honor forever." This should be our answer, this should be our comfort and all our confidence.

The second lesson that you have to learn hence is that, though God produce great fruit in souls through your ministry, and work great conversions and even miracles, you should not be proud nor think more of yourself on that account, but remain as rooted in your knowledge of yourself and your own mean condition as if you had done nothing, since you have not this of your own strength; it is God who works by your means. Oh, how well does the Prophet David teach us this, theory as well as practice! "Lord, we have heard with our ears, and our forefathers have told us, the wonderful works that Thou didst do in their days, in those olden times. It is Thou, O Lord, Who didst do those wonders, and Thine were those exploits, not theirs. It was Thy powerful hand, O Lord, that did destroy the nations, and cast them out of their land, and planted and placed our ancestors in their stead. Thou didst do it, O Lord; it was not their arms nor their bravery that did it. Thy right hand, Thy might and strength it is, O Lord, that wrought these wonders in them and for them; and that was not for their merit either, but because so it pleased Thee, O Lord, and Thou didst choose to do it, and wert pleased to have it so" (Psalm xliii. 2-4).

Thus we have nothing to be proud of in the fact that God works great things through our means; but rather, the greater they are, the more we should feel confounded and humbled to think that He uses such weak and pitiful instruments for the doing of things so great and marvelous. We should behave herein as the Apostle St. Peter behaved when Christ our Redeemer wrought through his means that great take of fish. The Evangelist St. Luke narrates that Christ bade St. Peter put out his nets for fishing, and he replied: *Master, all night we have labored and caught nothing, but at thy word I will once more put out the net* (Luke v. 5). And when they did so, they caught such a quantity of fish that the net was ready to break, and they had to call to their mates who were in the other ship to come to their help and draw the net in, and they filled both boats with fish; such was the multitude of fishes that they threatened to sink the boats with their exceeding great weight. The holy Gospel says that, when St. Peter saw such a great miracle as this, *he fell at the feet of Christ, and said, Depart from me, O Lord, because I am a sinful man,* and unworthy to be in Thy company: *for he was astounded, and the rest who were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken* (Luke v. 8-9). Peter was amazed and astonished, and not less humbled and confounded, seeing that he had labored all night in vain, and when he cast the net in the name of Christ, he had caught such a quantity. With such amazement and astonishment, then, and with still greater humility and recognition of our own weakness and misery, we should be struck when our Lord does any great work through our means. How far was Peter from any vanity or pride at having caught such a great draught! You should be equally far from any vanity and pride when God accomplishes anything through your means, recognizing it to be a work of God and very unlike you. This it is to have no confidence in self, and confidence in God; this it is to attribute to oneself what is one's own, and to attribute to God what is God's. See what Peter did when he cast the nets in his own name;

and there you will see what you are worth and what you can do by your own means, industry, and diligence; and see what he did when he cast his nets in the name of Christ, and there you will see how much you can do by His grace and favor. Looking at the former, you will give up confiding in self; looking at the latter, you will gather strength and confidence in God. In this way, on the one hand we shall have no vanity, however great be the things that the Lord does by our means; and on the other hand we shall not be discouraged at the sight of our own weakness and lowliness.

St. Jerome starts this question: Let us see, he says, which of the two did better: Moses, who, when God sent him to lead His people out of Egypt, excused himself, saying that he was not fit for the work, and begged God to send a better man; or Isaias, who without being called or chosen volunteered to go and preach, saying, *Here I am, send me* (Isaias vi. 8). The saint answers that an excellent thing is humility, and knowledge of oneself and one's good-for-nothingness; and an excellent thing also is readiness and courage to serve and help one's neighbor; but if you ask which is the better thing, he says that with Moses we ought to take the side of humility, looking at our own weakness; and with Isaias we should pluck up heart and readiness, trusting in the mercy and goodness of the Lord, Who touched his lips and gave him confidence for the mission on which He sent him. Humility and confidence are not contraries, nor do they hinder one another, but rather humility is a help to putting all our confidence in God and gathering thence increase of courage and strength.

The third lesson to learn is this, that, though it is true that no one ought to be confident or rest upon his own efforts, yet we must put forward and bring to play on our part all the energies we can for the help of our neighbor, since to expect God to produce the fruit without our taking the means would be to ask for miracles and tempt

God. He wishes to make use of our aid for the conversion of souls, and so St. Paul calls us *fellow workers and co-operators with God* (I Cor. iii. 9). And on this account the Lord bade St. Peter cast his nets, and would not give him the fish except in that manner, to give us to understand that we are not to fold our arms and do nothing. And on the other hand that we should not attribute the good success and gain of souls to our own nets, our own industry and diligence, He would have it that Peter should first cast his nets and labor all night at fishing without taking anything. Thus we are to cast our nets and apply all possible means and use all diligence, as though that alone were sufficient to bring our concerns to issue; while on the other hand we are to distrust all that as though we had done nothing, and put our whole confidence in God. This it is that Christ our Redeemer teaches us in the holy Gospel: *When ye have done all things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants, we have done but what we ought to have done* (Luke xvii. 10). Where observe that He does not say: "When you have done something of what you ought," but "When you have done all that you ought;" giving us to understand that, however much diligence we show and however many means we employ, we are not to trust in that, but put all our confidence in God, attributing and giving to Him the glory of all. The saints set this down for the highest and most perfect humility, as we have said in its due place.

When St. Peter and St. John cured the man lame from his birth, who was begging alms at the gate of the Temple that was called Beautiful, the people, astonished at the miracle, flocked to gaze upon them as something divine; and the Apostle St. Peter said to them: *Ye men of Israel, why gaze ye in wonder at us as though we had done this by our own power? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye gave up and denied before Pilate, when he judged that he* *ought to be set free* (Acts iii. 12-13). The same thing happened in the case of St. Paul and St. Barnabas, on occasion of a similar miracle which they wrought, so that the people took them for gods, and wanted to adore and sacrifice to them as such, and brought crowns to crown them, saying: *Gods in human shape have come down amongst us.* They rent their garments, saying: "*What do ye? We too are mortal men like yourselves* (Acts xiv. 14); it is not we that could do such a deed, but God; to Him give this honor and glory." They remained seated in their humility, as though they had done nothing. So we should remain when we have done all that we ought in aid of souls.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the Great Efficacy of This Practice of Putting Confidence in God for the Obtaining of Blessings at His Hands

THE blessed St. Cyprian, explaining what God said to the children of Israel: *Every spot that your foot shall tread upon shall be yours* (Deut. xi. 24), says: "Your foot is your confidence—*pes vester spes vestra est;* and as far as it shall go, so far shall go your receiving of favors from God. All shall be yours, so far as the foot of your confidence goes." St. Bernard says the same. "If you have great confidence in God and hope great things of Him, great things will He grant you and do by your means; and if little, little. In the holy Gospel we read many examples which show this to us. That ruler of the synagogue who left his daughter dying, and when he came to Christ our Redeemer she was already dead, said: *Lord, my daughter is now dead, but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live* (Matt. ix. 18). He had some faith and confidence, since he believed that Christ could raise his daughter from the dead; but he had only a little, since he thought it was necessary that He should go to the spot and lay His hand on her, and in that way he had confidence that she would live; and the Redeemer of the world did by him according to the measure of confidence that he had. He went there and found her dead, and took her by the hand and raised her. The other woman who had been suffering for twelve years from a flux of blood, and had spent all her substance on doctors, and they had not been able to cure her, came to Christ our Redeemer with a little more faith: *for she said within herself: If I can touch but his garment, I shall be healed* (Matt. ix. 21). She makes her way through the midst of the crowd, approaches, and touches the hem of His garment, and is healed at once. God dealt with her according to the faith and hope she had. But the centurion, with his paralytic servant, had more faith than either of them. He came to the Redeemer of the world and said to Him: "Lord, my servant is in bed palsied; but there is no need for Thee to go there to heal him, nor for him to come here to touch Thy garment; *say but the word, and my servant shall be healed* (Matt. viii. 8). While he remains there, Thou canst give command here, and he will be cured." See what great faith! *Jesus admired, and said to those about Him: Amen I say unto you, I have not found such faith in Israel* (Matt. viii. 10). And, turning to the centurion, He said to him: *According to thy faith be it done to thee. And the servant was healed that same hour* (Matt. viii. 13). He had confidence in Jesus Christ that by His mere word He could work the cure from where He stood; and He did heal him from where He stood, by His mere word. You see how God deals with us according to the confidence that we have in Him, acting up to the prayer of the Royal Prophet, David: *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have hoped in Thee* (Psalm xxxii. 22). Deep as shall be the vessel of your confidence shall be also the amount of water that it shall draw, says St. Cyprian.

So it also fared with the Apostle St. Peter. Christ our

Redeemer bade him come to Him on the waters; and so long as he had no fear, he walked on the surface of the sea as if it were dry land; and when he did begin to fear, seeing a strong wind getting up, at once he began to sink, and Christ reproached him for his little faith: *Man of little faith, why didst thou doubt?* (Matt. xiv. 31); giving him to understand that he was drowning because he got afraid and lost confidence. That is why it seems at times that we are drowning and perishing in temptations and afflictions and worry of affairs, because of the little confidence we have. Had we great confidence in God, He would help us and bring us well out of all these critical situations, and would do us many favors. When King Josaphat was much afraid of the Moabites and Ammonites, who were marching against the people of God, for the great multitude of their armies, God sent to say to him by a prophet: "Be not afraid of this multitude, for it is not your war, but God's. It is not you that have to fight; I only wish you to keep up your courage and confidence, and you shall see the favor of heaven upon you" (II Chron. xx. 15, 17). And forthwith they found it so; for while they kept quiet, God destroyed the army of the enemy, making them turn their arms against one another and slay one another.

Let us, then, consider how little God asks of us as a condition of giving us aid and victory over our enemies. So in the Ninetieth Psalm the Lord gives no other reason for protecting and delivering a man in time of tribulation than this, that he has hoped and confided in Him. *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him, because he hath known my power and goodness.* St. Bernard makes marvelous exclamation on those words: "O most sweet liberality, never to be wanting to those who hope and have confidence in Him"—*Dulcissima liberalitas in se sperantibus non deesse. In thee, O Lord, have our fathers hoped, and thou hast delivered them: they had recourse and cried to thee, and they were saved: they put* *their whole trust in thee, and were not confounded* (Psalm xxi. 5-6). Whoever cried to God and put his trust in Him, and was not heard and succored by His Divine Majesty! *Cast thine eyes on all nations and on all ages of the world,* says the Wise Man, *and thou wilt find that none hath hoped in God and been confounded* (Ecclus. ii. 11-12). Who has ever called upon Him and been despised by Him?

And, further, there is another reason, of which we have already spoken at length, and therefore here we need but touch upon it; it is that, when we cease to trust in ourselves and put our whole confidence in God, we attribute all to God and give Him charge of the whole business, and so we strongly bind Him to do His own business and stand up for His honor. Lord, this business of the conversion of souls is Thine, and not ours; as for us, what part can we have in it, if Thou dost not move their hearts? Stand up, then, O Lord, for Thine own honor and do Thine own business. Those are marvelous words to this effect with which Josuah importuned God and did violence to Him for the liberation of his people. It is very well for us, O Lord, to be humbled and overturned by our enemies, since we have well deserved it; but *what will become of thy great name?* (Jos. vii. 9). What will the heathen say when they see Thy people destroyed and in captivity? They will say that Thou couldst not bring them to the Land of Promise. Stand up, then, O Lord, for Thine own honor. *Not to us, but to thy name give glory* (Psalm cxiii. 1). We seek not honor and glory for ourselves; if we ask for it, it is for Thee. *Of the Lord our God is justice and holiness, but to us is due shame and confusion to our face* (Baruch i. 15). In every way, to have great confidence in the Lord is a sure means of making Him do us favors, for the great satisfaction which such confidence gives Him. *The good pleasure of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy* (Psalm cxlvi. 11).

We who live under obedience have another very particular reason for having great confidence in the aid of the Lord attending upon our ministries. It is that He it is Who has ordered it and puts us to such work, and therefore gives us strength for what He orders and will draw us well out of it. Holy Writ relates that God commanded Moses to make the Tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant, and the mercy-seat that was to be over it, and the altar, and the table of shewbread, and many vessels besides that were needed for the service of the Tabernacle. And God gave the plan of it all, how it was to be, and the proportions to be observed, and added that, for the doing of all this well and in conformity with the plan laid down, He had chosen Beseleel and Ooliab, and given them knowledge and skill to know how to execute all possible designs in gold, silver, precious stones, brass, marble, and every sort of wood; and they would carry out right well all that He had told them (Exod. xxxi. 1-6). Now if to make a material tabernacle God was so careful to give infused knowledge to those artificers who were to execute the work, what will He do for the workers and ministers of the Gospel, who have to build and elaborate the spiritual tabernacle of souls, souls who are living temples of God and the dwelling of the Holy Ghost, and to widen and extend the house and kingdom of God? As the spiritual is more than the material and of greater consequence before God, so much greater confidence should we have that He will give us all that is necessary for doing well the work for which God has chosen us. So the holy Gospel says: "When you come before princes and emperors and the great ones of the world to answer and stand up for the honor of God, trouble not yourselves to think how you are to speak, for God will teach you then what you are to say, for it is not you who speak, but God Who speaks in you" (Matt. x. 19-20). *I,* says Christ our Redeemer, *will give you utterance and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall be unable to resist or contradict* (Luke xxi. 15). And that was well seen in the glorious

Protomartyr St. Stephen, of whom it is said in the Acts of the Apostles (vi. 10), that all who disputed with him were unable to resist the spirit and wisdom that spoke in him.

CHAPTER XVII

How Very Displeasing to God Is Want of Confidence

AS by confidence in God we greatly honor and please His Divine Majesty, and it is a means to draw down upon us many blessings at His hands, so on the contrary one of the things by which God is most offended, a thing which most particularly displeases Him and which He punishes with the greatest severity, is want of confidence, since that touches His honor. So we see that this was one of the things for which God was most angry with the children of Israel and for which He punished them. Holy Scripture relates that, when Moses sent the spies into the Land of Promise, they came back in consternation and told the people that they had seen giants so stout and strong that in comparison with them they were as locusts; and cities they had seen so fortified with walls and towers that there was no making way into them. Thereupon such terror fell upon the people and such despair of ever being able to enter into the Land of Promise, that they debated among themselves the question of choosing a captain to lead them back into Egypt. God was very angry with the people, and said to Moses: *How long shall this people fail to believe or trust me, after having seen so many signs and wonders as I have done for them? I will send upon them a pestilence, and put an end to them all at one stroke* (Num. xiv. 11-12). Moses set himself to mediate, and implored God to pardon them; and God said: "For love of thee I pardon them for the present; but all those who have seen the wonders and signs that I did in Egypt, and afterwards in the desert, and have failed to believe and trust Me, shall be excluded from entering into the Land of Promise. I warrant thee, not one shall set eyes upon it." And as He swore it, so He carried it out. Six hundred thousand men were they whom God delivered from Egypt, not counting women and children (Num. i. 46), and all died in the desert without entering into the Land of Promise or setting eyes upon it, in punishment of their want of confidence. Josuah and Caleb alone, who had the confidence to believe that they should enter and overcome the enemy, and encouraged the people thereto, did enter, and the little children, who, the spies said, were sure to be made captives and the prey of their enemies. Hereby is seen how much God abhors want of confidence in Him.

Even Moses himself and Aaron, because in striking the rock with their rod they had some doubt as to whether they should draw water, whereas God had told them that they should draw it, for this want of confidence were punished in the same way. *Because ye have not believed nor trusted me, to sanctify me in the sight of the children of Israel, ye shall not be the men who shall lead this people into the land which I will give them* (Num. xx. 10, 12); ye shall not enter into the Land of Promise either. Moses saw it from a mountain top hard by, but entered not into it. *Thou hast seen it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not enter therein* (Deut. xxxiv. 4); as though to say: "Thou hast seen it, but thou shall not enjoy it." This matter of distrust is a matter that touches the honor of God, and therefore He punished it in this manner.

Hence we may draw two lessons. First, how evil and how displeasing to God are these fits of distrust and discouragement in which some people indulge—now in temptations, at other times on the question of their spiritual advancement, at others in the functions and affairs which obedience imposes upon them. They fancy these fits proceed from humility, and in reality they proceed from nothing but pride; for they fix their eyes on themselves, expecting to be able to do the thing out of their own strength, industry, and diligence, which is great pride. The second lesson that we must draw from hence is that, in all our affairs, necessities, and labors, the first thing to do is to have recourse to God and put our whole trust in Him. It should not be the first thing to fix our eyes on human means and on our own diligence and industry, and the last thing to have recourse to God. That is a great abuse, common in the world. The first thing people do is to fix their eyes on human means, and try them all without recourse to God; then, when they find that nothing comes of it and the business seems desperate, they betake themselves to God. So His Majesty allows these very human means to fail us in which we trusted, as He said to King Asa: *Because thou hast put thy trust in the king of Syria, and not in the Lord thy God, therefore his army hath escaped thy hand* (II Chron. xvi. 7). God is mightily offended and aggrieved at our falling back upon any basis of support but Him. Our eyes should be turned to God at once. One of the chief things that we can gain in meditation is to have firm-seated in our heart this great confidence in God; for we go to meditation to plant virtues in our soul, and this is one of the chiefest and most necessary of virtues. We must not rest until our heart is thoroughly habituated to have recourse to God in all things, and thoroughly trusts in Him, not going to seek remedy elsewhere but in God, God being all our refuge and our whole strength, according to those words of Josaphat, King of Israel: *Since we know not what we ought to do, we have this only remaining to us to lift up our hearts to thee* (II Chron. xx. 12). *Blessed is the man whose hope is in the name of the Lord* (Psalm xxxix. 5).

CHAPTER XVIII

That We Must Not Be Discouraged nor Lose Heart, Though We See Little Fruit Produced by Our Labors among Our Neighbors

WOE is me, that I am become as one who goes to gather grapes in autumn, and finds not one bunch to eat (Mich. vii. 1). The Prophet Micheas complains in these words of the little fruit that he produced in the people of Israel by his discourses. Woe is me, he says, because that has befallen me which is wont to befall those who go gleaning grapes in the autumn after the vintage is over, thinking to find something, and find not one single bunch. Isaias makes the like complaint: *The city is made a desert, and her gates shall be stricken with solitude: for it shall be in the midst of the land and in the midst of the people as the few berries that fall by shaking an olive tree that has already been beaten, and the gleanings that remain when the vintage is over: so shall be the number of the good* (Isaias xxiv. 12-13). One of the things that are apt greatly to discourage and take the heart out of those whose business it is to aid and improve their neighbor is to see the little good that is done by their sermons and the other means that they take to that end. How few are converted, how few are improved and amended, and how few persevere! Since this is a very common complaint and temptation, we will meet it here and make use of a very good remedy to give us courage and comfort in our ministries. St. Augustine treats this point very well, and answers and satisfies this complaint by the example of Christ our Redeemer and Master. Think you, he says, that the Son of God preached only to His disciples, or only to the people that were sure to believe in Him? Do we not see that He preached also to His enemies, who came to tempt Him and find matter of misrepresentation in Him? Or perhaps He preached only when He had a crowd and a great many listeners? Do we not see Him preaching to one single woman, of low rank, a Samaritan woman, a watercarrier, and with her He dealt with the question of prayer, whether it was to be in the Temple, or might be made outside its walls? But, you will say, He knew that she was destined to believe and profit by His conversation and discourse. True, says St. Augustine; but what will you say to the many times that He spoke and preached to the Jews, Pharisees, and Sadducees, who not only were not going to believe, but were going to calumniate and persecute Him? Sometimes He asked them questions in order to convince them by their own answers; at other times He answers their questions, although He knew that they put them only to try Him. We do not read of any of them being converted thereby. He knew well that so it was to be; but to give us an example, He would preach to those who He knew never would be converted or profit by His preaching, but perhaps be the worse for it, to teach us, who do not know whether those whom we address will be converted or not, not to give over preaching and hearing confessions and doing what rests with us, without being discouraged at not seeing or hearing of any immediate fruit. Perhaps some soul is predestined to be converted by means of this preaching, and the Lord will touch his heart by means of this your talk or sermon; and though at present it seems to you that they are not being converted or improved, possibly they will be converted afterwards, and that seed of the word of God which fell in their heart will afterwards germinate, as not unfrequently happens. Thus we should never leave off doing what it rests with us to do for the help of our neighbor.

Gerson, in a treatise which he wrote "On Drawing Little Ones to Christ," speaks well on this point against those who lose courage and have no heart to deal with a certain class of people and hear their confessions because they think that they do not persevere, but go back at once to their sins, and that labor spent on them is time wasted, like throwing goods into a rotten sack. Gerson there animates and exhorts confessors to apply themselves to hearing boys' confessions, and says that great good may be done thereby; because these boys are at a parting of the waters, between two ways, and will follow that course on which they shall be set, and take his side who first gets hold of them. If they are first got hold of on the part of the devil and the world, they will go that way; and in like manner if they are got hold of on the part of God. Thus it is very important to show them the way of virtue and start them well on it at the outset, because in that way they will remain. And he answers the objection and excuse of those who refuse to hear these young folk's confessions, saying it is lost time and labor thrown away upon them because they have no capacity to understand what is said to them, and as soon as their confession is done, at once they go back to their old ways, frolicking and fighting with one another as if you had said nothing to them at all. Gerson goes on to say: If you refuse to hear their confessions because they go back at once to their old pranks and evil ways, at that rate you should not hear the confessions of grown-up people either, for they also, as soon as their confession is over, go back to their vomit and to sins very different from those that boys are apt to commit, for they often do not amount to mortal sins, and those others do. A fine thing, forsooth, it would be, if we cast off our penitents and ceased to hear their confessions because they straightway relapsed into the same sins! Not on that account, says Gerson, are we to leave off hearing confessions either of grown-up or little folk, in so far as they have a real purpose not to return to their sins. He brings two good comparisons to illustrate this. When a ship is leaking, does the man at the pump cease pumping because as much water keeps coming in as goes out? Nor again do we give over washing our hands, though they must presently get dirty again. We must keep to the pump, though we see that the water comes in as fast as it goes out; otherwise the ship would founder, whereas, as it is, it does not founder. We must wash our hands time after time, though they are sure quickly to get dirty again, lest otherwise the dirt might settle on them, and then be difficult to get off. In like manner we must not leave off hearing confessions and helping penitents, however clearly we foresee their straightway returning to the same sins; for if we gave them up, they would go all lengths to perdition; while, as it is, they hold back and do not give such full rein to their vices as they otherwise would do—and in the end, when all is said and done, there is hope of their salvation.

We read a very good precedent for this in the Life of our blessed Father Ignatius. Among other holy works in which he occupied himself, he engaged in the conversion of women of evil life. He got set up in Rome a new house for such as wished to leave off their shameful and wretched life. There was in the city a monastery of penitents, but they received there only such as wished to enter as nuns; and many of these poor women, though they desired to rise from their unhappy state, did not feel in themselves strength for such perfection; while others, being married, could not though they wished. To the end, therefore, that the one and the other might find a place of retreat, he caused a house to be opened for them under the name of the Monastery of St. Martha. And because nobody would begin so holy a work, though many offered to contribute to it, our holy Father began it himself out of his poverty with a hundred ducats, which he got for some jewels that he bade his procurator sell, though at the time he was in great want for the needs of the Society. His office of General hindered him not from taking this work so much to heart that, when there were any that wished to change their life, he himself accompanied them through the streets of Rome and conducted them to this Monastery of St.

Martha, or to some other decent home where he collected them. Some took upon themselves to tell him that he was losing his time in laboring to convert such creatures as these, who, as they were hardened in vice, would easily fall back into their former disorders. But he answered: "I do not count this labor lost; rather I say that if with all the labors and cares of a lifetime I could make sure of one of these women passing one single night without sin, I would take all my pains as well spent at that price, that the majesty of my Creator and Lord should not be offended for that short time, though I knew for certain that after that she would go back to her foul and wretched ways." Thus, though we knew for certain that our penitents were to return at once to their sins, we should count the labor of our whole life well employed to secure their going one hour at least without sin, or avoiding one mortal sin. This is true zeal for the honor and glory of God. He who digs in search of treasure first throws up much earth, and reckons all that labor well spent to find a little gold.

But let us go farther and put the case that no one is converted, nor leaves off his sin even for an hour; still, I say, we ought not to leave off preaching and doing whatsoever depends upon us for the help of souls. St. Bernard in a letter to Pope Eugenius III, who had been a monk and disciple of his, exhorts him to reform the people and court of Rome; and, having dwelt at length on that topic, he goes on: "But perhaps you will laugh at me, and tell me that you have broken off finally with the Roman people, a froward and proud sort, lovers of tumults, wars, and dissensions, an intractable and untameable lot, who can never be at peace or subject to anyone except when they have no power to resist; a people from whom no good is to be expected, and to labor for whom is to labor in vain." The saint gives this marvelous reply: "Do not lose heart; care, not cure, is what is asked of you. *You have been established for their governor,* says the Wise Man; *take care of* *them* (Eccles. xxxii. 1-2). And take notice that he says not, 'Cure them.'" The superior is not bound to find an effectual cure and remedy for the faults of his subjects; it does not rest with him to do so. The verse says well: *Non est in medico semper relevetur ut aeger*—"The patient's recovery does not rest always with the physician." A man's being a good physician, and doing well what belongs to his office, does not depend on that.

But let us leave alone, says St. Bernard, the witness of externs, since we have better witness of our own. The Apostle St. Paul says: *I have labored more than all* (I Cor. xv. 10). He does not say: "I have produced more fruit than all," because he knew well, as he had been taught by God, that *everyone shall receive reward and recompense according to his labor* (I Cor. iii. 8), not according to the success and fruit that he has gained; and therefore the Apostle glories in his labors, and not in the fruit thereof. And so he says elsewhere: *I have seen myself in more labors than them* (II Cor. xi. 23). Do, then, what belongs to your part; plant, water, labor, and cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, and thereby you will have accomplished all that can be laid to your charge. The increase and fruit does not stand to your account. The Lord will give it when He pleases; and if, perchance, He is not pleased to give it, you will lose nothing by that, since the Scripture says: *The Lord will give the just the reward of their labors* (Wisdom x. 17); for God pays and gives the reward and recompense to each according to his works and labors, and not according to the success and fruit that follows from them. O happy and secure labor, the reward of which is not diminished or impaired by any issue that befalls! Though there be no fruit, though nobody be converted or amended, you shall have your reward as full and complete as though there had been numbers of conversions and great fruit gained.

This be said, says St. Bernard, without prejudice to the goodness and omnipotence of God, because, however hardened the heart of the people, *God can make out of stones,* and hearts as hard as stone, *children of Abraham* (Matt. iii. 9). And who knows but that He will do it? *Who knoweth but that God will turn those eyes of mercy, and forgive, and leave us his blessing?* (Joel ii. 14). But, says the saint, I am not dealing now with what God is to do, for it does not become us to scrutinize His high judgments; what I am aiming at is to persuade those whose office it is to come to their neighbor's aid, not to fail to do all that they can in this respect under the idea that they are doing no good, since our merit and reward do not depend on that, but on doing our duty in our office, and doing it with all due diligence and care.

And besides, for two other reasons it greatly befits us, though there be nobody to convert and no fruit to be produced, none the less to persevere and not cease to preach and labor and do all that is in our power for the help of our neighbor, just as though there were many conversions and much improvement effected. In the first place, this befits the mercy and greatness of God. St. Chrysostom says: Fountains do not cease to run though none come to draw the water; it is part of the greatness of a city that the water should overflow and be spilled and lost for its abundance. In like manner preachers, through whom the water of Gospel teaching has to flow, must not give over preaching and shedding the word of God, whether men come many or few to draw this water. This is the magnificence and greatness of the goodness and mercy of God, that there is such abundance of doctrine in the Church that its fountains are ever welling forth and running for anyone who is thirsty and desires to drink. *All ye who are thirsty, come to the waters and drink; and ye who have no money, hasten to buy and eat: come and buy without money and without any exchange wine and milk* (Isaias lv. 1).

In the second place, this befits also the justice of God; for if men are not amended and converted by so many warnings, talks, and sermons, at least it will serve further to justify God's cause; *that thou mayest be justified in thy words, and mayest overcome when thou art judged* (Psalm l. 6), coming out victorious over the accusations of men. God wishes fully to justify His cause with men, that they may see that their condemnation rests not with Him, but with themselves, so that they have left no excuse nor ground of complaint but of themselves, seeing the many means and helps that they had. And even when they would not come to hear the sermon, preachers went out to preach in the streets. So God addresses Himself to giving reason and satisfaction to His people, alleging what He has done for them, saying by Isaias (v. 4): *What more could I have done for my vineyard, and have not done it? I planted it, I walled it in, I built a tower in the midst of it for its defense, and instead of grapes, that I looked for from it, it hath given me wild berries. Judge ye, then, between me and my vineyard,* and see whose fault it is that it fails to bear fruit. It is not a little but a great thing that you should serve to take God's part and to justify His cause with sinners at the day of judgment. Your sermons and admonitions will accuse, convict, and condemn the wicked, so that they shall not have a word to say.

Thus any way we take the thing, it befits us never to cease doing all that is in our power in aid of our neighbor, whether he be converted and improved or not. St. Augustine on that parable of the guests, speaking of the servant who by order of his lord went out to invite them to supper, and some of them refused to come, writes very well: "Think you that that servant will be reckoned among the slothful because those people would not come to the supper? No, certainly not; he shall be reckoned among the diligent and careful because he has done what he was commanded. He invited them, he asked them, and did what was in his power to get them to come to supper. They refused to come; they shall be the persons punished, while the servant shall only be rewarded for his ready diligence as fully as if they had all come." What God will ask us as part of our account is if we have done all that we could and ought for the improvement of our neighbor. That the said neighbor should actually have been improved is a good thing, a thing we should all desire and greatly rejoice at, as we read in the holy Gospel (Luke x. 21) that Christ our Redeemer rejoiced in spirit when the apostles had been to preach and had gathered great fruit. But, after all, that does not go to our account, but to someone else's. Everyone will have to give to God an account of what regards himself: the question we shall be asked will be whether we have done our duty well in all that it was in our power to do for the improvement of our neighbor; and our neighbor will give an account, and a very strict one, of how he benefited thereby.

Thus our merit and the perfection of our work do not depend on our neighbor's benefiting by it or not. We add another thing for our consolation—or rather, to console us in our desolation; it is that not only our merit, reward, and recompense do not depend on our neighbor's being converted and much good done, but in some sort we may say that we do more and merit more when nothing comes of it than when there is visible fruit. In the same way, speaking of prayer, we are wont to say that he does more who keeps to his prayer, having no devotion, but only distraction and dryness, than he who prays with devotion and consolation. For a preacher to see that he has a great hearing, and is followed by a crowd, and that there are many conversions on occasion of his sermons, is a very great gratification and comfort, so encouraging that he feels not the labor, as St. Gregory observes. On the contrary, to see that there is no improvement in the audience, and no good done, is in itself very disheartening and a great grief. For a preacher not to have his wings broken by such a come-down, but to go on with his work as if all the world were listening to him and benefiting, is a thing of high perfection, and shows well that what he does is done purely for God.

With this purity and perfection, then, we should manage to do our ministries, not setting our eyes chiefly on the fruit and good success of our works, but on doing in them the will of God, and on doing them with the greatest perfection we can to please God, for that is what His Divine Majesty asks and requires of us. And in this way the labor will be no obstacle to us, nor will the little fruit or the ill success discourage us, nor trouble us, nor rob us of our peace and contentment, as is apt to befall those who fix their eyes on the fruit and good success of their work.

Holy Scripture relates that Anna, wife of Elcana, felt very sad and disconsolate at not having children. Her husband, who cherished her greatly, said to her: *Anna, why weepest thou and art so afflicted? Is it not enough for thee that thou hast me? Am I not better to thee than ten children?* (I Kings i. 8). So we may say to these persons: Be not sad or disheartened; suffice it for you to cling to God, suffice it for you to give satisfaction to God, for that is worth more than the having of many spiritual children. This will be a great source of comfort in all labors.

EIGHTEENTH TREATISE

ON THE VOWS OF RELIGION

CHAPTER I

That the Perfection of a Religious Consists in the Perfect Observance of the Three Vows That He Makes of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience

BEFORE we come to speak in particular of each of these vows, we will make some observations on them in general. Let this be the first, that these three vows are the principal means which religious life offers for the attainment of perfection. St. Thomas says that a religious is in a state of perfection; and such is the common doctrine of the doctors and saints, taken from St. Denis the Areopagite. They do not mean to say that, being a religious, a man is at once perfect, says the glorious St. Thomas, but that he professes to travel on the road to perfection. *Non quasi profitentes se ipsos perfectos, sed profitentes se ad perfectionem tendere.* The religious does not profess to be already perfect, as the bishop professes, because the state of episcopacy requires perfection going before; but for the religious state it is not necessary that it should go before—it is enough if it comes after. St. Thomas well gathers this difference between the episcopal and the religious state from the words of Christ our Redeemer in the Gospel. In giving the counsel of voluntary poverty, which the religious professes, He does not suppose the person to whom He gives it to be perfect, but that he will be perfect if he observes those counsels. He did not say: *If thou art perfect, go sell what thou hast,* but: *If thou wilt be perfect* (Matt. xix. 21). But to make St. Peter a prelate, He asks him not only if he loves Him, but if he loves Him more than the rest do, and that not only once, but a second and third time, to give us to understand the great charity and perfection that is required for such an office. Thus both the episcopal state and the religious state are states of perfection, but in different ways; for the former presupposes perfection, and does not give it; while the religious state does not suppose perfection, but gives it. You are not bound at once to be perfect on being a religious, but you are bound to aspire after perfection, and make it your business and try for it. They allege for this that saying of St. Jerome: *Monachum perfectum in patria sua esse non posse, perfectum autem esse nolle delinquere est*—"A religious cannot be perfect, living at home in his native place"—a religious very fond of his native place and much attached to his relations is not taking the right road to perfection—"and not to seek perfection, or try for it, or aim at it, is a breach of duty in him," since he fails in what is due and obligatory in his state. And St. Eusebius of Ernessa says: "It is a great thing to enter religion; but he who after entering upon this state does not aim at perfection, runs great danger and risk of incurring damnation." And so St. Thomas says that a religious who makes no effort to attain perfection, nor concerns himself about it, is a mockery in religion, since he does not aim at nor try for that which he professes and for which he came into religion. Our life must be in agreement with the name that we bear.

Now the chief means that religion offers for the attainment of perfection are the three essential vows that we make of poverty, chastity, and obedience. St. Thomas explains this very well. The religious state, he says, may be considered in three ways. First, as it is an exercise of traveling to perfection; and for that it is necessary to get rid of those things that might hinder and hold back the heart from being wholly taken up with the love of God, in which perfection consists. These things are mainly three. The first is the coveting of exterior goods, and that obstacle is got rid of by the vow of poverty; the second is the craving after sensual pleasures, and that obstacle is got rid of by the vow of chastity; the third is the disorder of our will, and that is removed by the vow of obedience.

Secondly, the religious state may be considered as a state of great quiet and freedom from the things of the world, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *I would have you be without anxiety* (I Cor. vii. 32). This is very well secured by the three vows, since this anxiety and restlessness proceed chiefly from three things: property, which is removed by the vow of poverty; management of children and household, which is removed by the vow of chastity; disposal of one's self, of one's own acts and occupations—for example, "What shall I do to fill up my time? What office or place will suit me?"—and that care is removed by the vow of obedience, whereby a man puts himself in the hands of his superior, who holds the place of God, to do with him what he sees fit.

Thirdly, the religious state may be considered as a holocaust, whereby a man offers himself and all his belongings entirely to God. This he does completely by the three vows, because all that we hold here on earth is reducible to three heads—exterior goods of property and riches, and these we renounce and offer to God by the vow of poverty; bodily goods and pleasures, and these we renounce and offer by the vow of chastity; interior goods of the soul, and these we offer by the vow of obedience, whereby we renounce our will and understanding, handing them over and subjecting them to the superior in place of God. Thus, whatever way we look at it, we shall find that these three vows which we offer to God are the chief means that religion supplies for the attainment of perfection.

It is related in the chronicles of the Friars Minor that Christ our Redeemer once appeared to St. Francis and bade him make Him three offerings. "Thou knowest, O Lord," answered the saint, "that I have already offered Thee all that I have, and that I am all Thine, and that I have nothing left in the world but this habit and cord, which are Thine also. What, therefore, can I offer to Thine Infinite Majesty? I would I had another heart and another soul to offer Thee. But since Thou biddest me make an offering, give it me, O Lord, that therewith I may serve and obey Thee." The Lord said to him: "Put thy hand into thy bosom and offer Me what thou findest." He did so, and found in his bosom a piece of gold so large and beautiful that he had never seen the like. He stretched out his arm at once, and offered it to the Lord. He was bidden do the same a second and a third time; and each time he drew out another piece of gold and offered it. And the Lord told him that these three offerings signified golden obedience, precious poverty, and fair chastity. These things, says the saint, the Lord has given me the grace of offering to Him so perfectly that my conscience reproaches me on no point of the observance of them. Oh, that we could offer to God these three vows in such sort that our conscience should reproach us on no point of the observance of them! Oh, that we could say, not with St. Francis alone, but with holy Job: *Mine heart hath not reproached nor rebuked me in the whole course of my life* (Job xxvii. 6).

CHAPTER II

Why These Things Are Done and Confirmed Under Vow

BUT someone will say: Why is this done under vow, since poverty, chastity, and obedience may be observed without vows? To which St. Thomas and all theologians very well reply that it was necessary in religion that this should be done under vows, because vows are the essence of religious life, and of them it comes to be a state of perfection; and without them religion would not be religion, nor a state of perfection. The reason of this is that for a state of perfection there is required a perpetual obligation to the things of perfection; since a *state* means of itself something stable, firm, and permanent, as we speak of the *state* of matrimony and the perpetual tie that it carries with it.

So, also, for a man to be in a state of perfection, there is needed a perpetual tie and obligation to perfection, and that is made by the vows of religion. St. Thomas says this is the difference between parish priests and bishops, whereby the latter are in a state of perfection, and the former are not; because parish priests are not bound to the care of souls by vow and perpetual obligation—they can resign it when they like; but bishops are in a state of perfection because they are under a perpetual obligation to the pastoral office, which they cannot resign without leave and authorization of the pope. This is also the difference between the perfection of a man in the world and that of a religious; for, though it may well be that there in the world a man may be more perfect than a religious, nevertheless he is not in a state of perfection, and the religious is. The perfection of the man in the world is not confirmed by vows like that of the religious, and so has not that firmness and stability in good which the religious has by reason of his state. Today he is chaste and well-purposed, and tomorrow he goes back; but the religious, though he is not perfect, is in a state of perfection, being tied and bound to it by vows of things that belong to perfection, and for him there is no going back. Hence the answer of a holy man [Brother Giles] on being asked whether it was possible to obtain the grace of God and perfection while remaining in the world. He answered: "Yes, it is possible; but I would rather have one degree of the grace of God in religion than ten in the world." And the reason is that in religion grace is easily preserved and increased, as therein man lives apart from the tumult and perturbation of the world, the deadly enemy of grace, and is helped and spurred on to virtue and perfection by the example of his spiritual brethren, and has many other things to help him thereto; but quite the contrary is found in the world, and so the grace which one has there in that secular life is easily lost and with difficulty maintained. Hence we may infer, said that holy man, that it is better to have less grace, secured and safeguarded by the many supports that foster it in religion, than a much higher degree with the evident danger that there is in the world.

Hence will be readily understood the temptation of certain novices, who fancy that there in the world they will keep up their meditation and recollection as they do here, and will lead a very edifying life. The devil is deceiving them, trying to get them to give up what they have and entice them out of religion. There in the world an ex-novice will begin by being very devout, going to confession every week, making meditation, avoiding occasions dangerous to chastity. But as he remains his own master and is not under any perpetual obligation, and many lets and hindrances get in his way, it comes to be that one morning he omits his meditation, another day his confession, another day he engages in a distracting conversation, and another day he loses everything. We have daily experience of this. But a religious cannot leave these things out, nor go back upon his profession and the state in which his vows have placed him. His vows are that triple cord of which the Holy Ghost says: *A triple cord is hardly broken* (Eccles. iv. 12). That is hardly broken or untied which is fastened and tied with these three cords.

It is these three vows, then, that make our mode of life a religious life and a state of perfection. The saints say that the apostles, taught by Christ, made a begining in themselves, and laid these foundations of religious life, offering themselves to Christ our Lord by vow, when they left all things to follow Him (St. Thomas 2a—2æ, p. 88, art. 4, ad 3). So it is by apostolic tradition, derived from Christ, that the usage obtains in the Catholic Church of religious' dedicating themselves to God by these three vows.

CHAPTER III

Of Other Great Benefits and Advantages That the Obligation of the Vows Carries with It

BESIDES what has been mentioned, the vows carry another great utility and profit, which is that what is done under vow is much more praiseworthy and of greater value and merit before God, than what is done voluntarily without vow. For this St. Thomas assigns three excellent reasons. The first is because a vow is an act of religion, which is the greatest and most excellent of all moral virtues; and so it gives a stamp of superior excellence to the other virtues, making them works of religion, a sacred thing, an act of divine worship, a sacrifice and thing now dedicated and promised to God. Thus fasting, which is an act of temperance, is made also an act of religion, and so becomes a meritorious work in two ways, by virtue of the act of fasting in itself and by its being an act of religion. And generally in all that we do under obedience we gain a double merit, one that of the act itself, the other the merit of obedience. Thus our works are more meritorious than they would be if done of our own will, away from obedience and without vow. This will be better understood by the contrary. When a man sins against a vow of chastity, he commits two sins, one against chastity and the Sixth Commandment; the other, and the greater sin, of sacrilege against the vow that he has has made; so also when a man keeps his vow of chastity, he gains two merits, one of the virtue of chastity and observance of the Sixth Commandment; the other, and a greater merit, that of fulfilling the vow which he has made to God, which is an act of the virtue of religion. And so of the other vows.

The second reason why it is more meritorious is because he who does a thing under vow does more, and gives and offers more to God, than another who does it without vow, because he not only gives what he does, but gives also his inability to do otherwise, which is much more; he offers to God his liberty, which is the greatest thing that he can offer. An excellent thing it is to leave all for Christ; but by the vow of poverty a man not only leaves the property which he has, but also the very power of keeping it, which is much more. He gives the tree along with the fruit, an excellent comparison used by St. Thomas and St. Anselm to explain this. As he does more and gives more, he says, who presents another with the tree itself along with all its fruit, than he who gathers the fruit and sends it, keeping the tree; so the religious gives to God the tree along with the fruit; while people living in the world at most give to God the fruit of the tree, that is, sundry good works, but they do not offer Him the tree, which is themselves: they keep that; they remain their own. But the religious offers also his very self, tree and fruit, work, desire, and liberty; he gives all to God, he is now no longer his own. For the religious there is nothing left more for him to give; he has given all. St. Bonaventure brings another comparison. He says that, as he gives more who gives not only the use of a thing, but the ownership as well, so the religious, who offers himself to God by vows, gives more and makes a greater sacrifice of himself because he gives not only his works, but also his will and his liberty of doing otherwise; he delivers himself over to God, use and dominion alike.

The third reason why what is done under vow is of greater merit than what is done without vow is because the goodness of exterior works springs chiefly from the will; and the better the will, the better also are the works that proceed from it. But it is clear that the firmer, steadier, and more lasting the good will is, the better it will be, because it will be so much the further from falling into that defect which the Wise Man notes: *The sluggard willeth and willeth not* (Prov. xiii. 4). Even the pagan philosopher, Aristotle, sets it down as one of the conditions of virtue that the act be done firmly and steadily. Now this is what the vow does; it gives firmness and steadiness to the good work, and so renders it more perfect. Contrariwise, theologians say that he who is obstinate in sin sins more grievously than another who sins by weakness or overpowered by a sudden fit of passion, because his will is more rooted and fixed in evil, and this they call sin against the Holy Ghost (Matt. xii. 32). So, then, to do a good work with a very firm will, and a will fixed and resolute in good, makes an action very perfect and meritorious.

Furthermore, if we consider on the one hand our own weakness, and on the other the virulence and pertinacity of the devil in tempting us, it appears that no expedient could be found more to the purpose, as well for strengthening our weakness as for closing the gate against the devil, than binding ourselves to God by these vows. As one who is soliciting the hand of a rich lady loses his hopes, and there is an end to his solicitations, when he sees her married to another; so, when the devil sees that a soul has now espoused herself to God by means of these vows, he loses his hopes of bringing her round again to the things of this world, and often on that account he ceases to tempt her, because he fears that such temptation will serve only to augment her crown, and that he will lose where he thought to gain.

CHAPTER IV

Why the Surrender That One Makes of Oneself to Religion by These Three Vows Is Called by the Saints a Second Baptism and a Martyrdom

OF so great value and merit before God is the entire surrender of oneself to God by these three vows of religion that theologians and saints say that thereby one gains remission of all one's sins, so that, were you to die then, you would go straight to heaven without passing through purgatory, like one dying immediately after receiving baptism (St. Thomas 2a—2æ, q. ult. art. 3, ad 3). And so St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, and St. Bernard call it a second baptism. And this does not happen by way of indulgences. As for plenary indulgences, novices gain one the first day they are received and are given the habit of religion, on condition of confession and Communion. But what I speak of happens not merely by virtue of an indulgence, but by virtue of the act itself being so excellent and heroic that, of itself and without any indulgence, it makes satisfaction for all the penalty due to one's sins. Doctors quote in support of this what is read in the Life of St. Anthony. It appeared to the saint in a vision that the angels were carrying him up to heaven, and the devils came forth to get in his way and tried to bar his going up, accusing him of some sins that he had committed in the world. The angels answered: "If you have anything to accuse him of since he has been a religious, accuse him of that; but as for the sins that he committed in the world, they are already pardoned and atoned for; that account was wiped out on the day that he became a religious." Whereupon the devils were dumbfounded.

The Prophet Daniel said to King Nabuchodonosor: *Redeem thy sins by almsdeeds* (Dan. iv. 24). But if to give alms out of part of one's substance is such a satisfaction to God for one's sins, how much greater satisfaction will he make who gives all! It is more to give all and leave all than to give only a part. A good thing it is, a very good thing, when a man of property shares it with the poor; but much better is his act who leaves all to follow Christ. St. Jerome, writing against the heretic, Vigilantius, very well proves this to be the better course by the testimony of Christ Himself uttered in the holy Gospel: *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the* *poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me* (Matt. xix. 21). It is, therefore, the more perfect thing to leave all by one act and follow Christ. St. Gregory on Ezechiel, quoted by St. Thomas, says that persons in the world, who keep their property in their own hands and share it with the poor, offer to God a *sacrifice* of their property because they give something to God while keeping something for themselves; but the religious, who keeps nothing for himself, but renounces all for love of God, offers to God a *holocaust,* which is more than a sacrifice. What, then, must it be to leave for God not only all one's property, but also oneself—one's body by the vow of chastity, and one's will and understanding by the vow of obedience! What must it be to live ever denying and mortifying oneself for love of God! For that is the life of a religious: *Ever carrying about, imprinted on our body, the mortification of Jesus* (II Cor. iv. 10). The excellence and perfection of this deed is well seen by the fact that, though one has made a vow to go to Rome and Jerusalem, and give all one's property and acquisitions to the poor, and serve in the hospitals all one's life, and take the discipline every day, and fast on bread and water, and go about wearing a hair shirt, and anything further that you like to mention, he has only to enter religion, and all those obligations cease and are commuted into that, as being a better thing, more pleasing to God, and a thing of greater perfection. So it is laid down in the canon law, and all doctors hold it.

Finally, so great and heroic is this act of dedicating oneself and surrendering oneself entirely to God by the three vows, that the saints compare the religious state to martyrdom, and say that such is the life of a religious, and that not a short struggle like that of the martyrs, but continual and prolonged. St. Bernard says: "It does not look so horrible as the martyrdom of rack and knife, of gridiron and fire; but in point of duration it is much more irksome and painful." The martyrdom of the martyrs of old was done with one stroke of the sword, and all was over; but the martyrdom of a religious is not done at a stroke, but always and every day they are to go about martyring you, mortifying you in honor and reputation, and doing violence to your self-will and judgment, according to the saying of the prophet: *For thee, O Lord, we are mortified all day long, and treated as sheep for the slaughter* (Psalm xliii. 22). We have to be ready for everything, exposed like sheep at the shambles. As the martyrs did not themselves choose at their will the torment and kind of death to be inflicted on them, but were ready to receive any that was given, so a religious should be like a martyr, disposed and on the lookout for every sort of mortification.

As, then, by martyrdom (so saints and councils say) a martyr gains the remission of all his sins, and goes straight to heaven without passing through purgatory—and it would be an insult to a martyr to pray for him, martyrdom being so heroic and excellent a work that, as Christ our Redeemer says: *Greater love no man hath than to give his life for his friend* (John xv. 13), because he has nothing more to give —so also by this offering whereby a man dedicates himself to God in religion by perpetual vows, being a work so excellent and heroic that thereby one gives all that one can give and has nothing more left to give, the taker of such vows has remitted to him the penalty of all his sins, and remains as he was just after baptism, or would have been, had he suffered martyrdom. And therefore the saints compare it to baptism and martyrdom, because in this respect they agree.

CHAPTER V

That Liberty Is Not Given Up or Diminished by Vows, but Rather Is Perfected

BUT someone will say: I quite see that the giving up of oneself to God by these vows is attended by all these blessings and advantages; but, after all, it seems that the man who takes vows loses his liberty, and deprives himself of what is so great a good that, as the poet says: "It is not to be purchased or compensated for by gold"—*Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro.* To this St. Thomas gives a very good answer. He says: You are mistaken; liberty is not given up by vows, but rather is perfected. And he enlarges on this point very well, showing that the effect of vows is to confirm and fix the will in good, so that it may be further removed from falling away; and this does not abolish, but rather perfects liberty in its own fashion. Thus in God and in the blessed in heaven their being unable to sin does not deprive them of liberty, but rather they possess it in the highest degree. And the apostles, who were confirmed in grace and could not sin mortally, did not lose their liberty by that, but rather it was perfected thereby, since it was confirmed and fixed more surely in the good for which it was created. And this is what our Father says in the Letter on Obedience: "Think it no little profit to your free will that you are able by obedience to give it back entirely to Him Who gave it, whereby you do not lose it, but perfect it, conforming your will entirely to that most sure rule of all rectitude, which is the divine will, the interpreter whereof is the superior who governs you in God's stead."

This is well borne out by what St. Anselm says: "The power of sinning, and the power of making ill use of your liberty, is not a perfection, but an imperfection and misery; not a power, but weakness and infirmity"—*Peccare non est* *libertas nec pars libertatis, est potius non posse quam posse.* "Would you see this clearly?" says St. Augustine. "God cannot do such a thing, although He is all-powerful. This is the one thing that the Almighty cannot do; He cannot lie or sin." The power of sinning means that sin and malice and misery have a certain empire over us, and all the more, the greater is that power; consequently, the further we remove ourselves from that, and establish and fix our will in good, the more we perfect it; and that we do by our vows, binding ourselves thereby to the good and better course. "Happy necessity," so St. Augustine cries, "that compels us to the better thing! Repent not of having bound yourself by vows; rather be glad that you are no longer allowed to do what, but for your vows, you would have been allowed to your sorrow." If they told you that, going by this road or by that gate, you were sure to miss your way or break your neck, would you not be glad of their shutting that gate in your face or closing to you that road—would they not be rendering you a great service—so that, even though you would, you could not get lost, nor break your neck, by going that way? Now, if you are to go to perdition and condemnation, it must be by the way of making ill use of your will. *Cesset voluntas propria et infernus non erit*—"Let self-will cease and there will be no hell." Therefore the more they block and close to you this road, that you may not make an ill use of your will, the greater good they do you. Thus to subject your will to the superior by the vow of obedience is not to lose liberty, but to perfect it, and enchase it in the fine gold of obedience and the will of God.

A grave doctor [Soto] adds a thing worthy of note. He says that, far from liberty's being diminished by vows, he who binds himself to God by them and puts himself under obedience, has more liberty than he who dares not do that. And he supports this position very well by the argument that liberty consists in being master of oneself; but he is more master of himself who makes a vow and binds and subjects himself under obedience than he who does not dare to do so. Let us take an example from the vow of chastity. The reason why you make a vow of chastity is because you think that you shall be master of yourself, by the grace of God, sufficiently to observe chastity; and, the reason why your friend in the world does not dare to do that, is because he thinks he shall not be master of himself to that extent. You see how you who make the vow are the one who has the more mastery over himself to do what he wishes, and what he sees is the right thing to do. But it is in this that liberty consists; the state of the other is not liberty, but subjection and servitude; he is not master, but the slave of his appetite and sensuality, which drags him and twists him about and makes him sin. This is what Holy Writ so often repeats: *I see in my members a law taking me captive to the law of sin. A man is the slave and captive of that which overcometh him. Whoever committeth sin, is the slave of sin* (Rom. vii. 23; II Pet. ii. 19; John viii. 34). It is the same with obedience. The reason why you put yourself under obedience by vow is because you trust, by the grace of God, that you shall be master of yourself sufficiently to follow the will of your superior and deny your own. Your friend does not feel master of himself to the extent of trusting his competence to bring himself to deny his own will, and go always by the will of another in the path of obedience, and therefore he is minded to stay in his own house, and has not the courage to enter religion and make a vow of obedience. Thus the putting of oneself under obedience and taking these vows is a sign of greater liberty and being more master of oneself. It is a noble and generous subjection, and to it the Wise Man counsels and exhorts us: *Put thy feet into her fetters and thy neck into her collar; bow down thy shoulder and bear her, and be not weary of her bonds* (Ecclus. vi. 25-26). O happy fetters, happy chains! which Holy Writ calls not *chains,* but *a collar—And thy neck into her collar.* These chains do not throttle the neck, but adorn it; for they are not chains of iron, but of gold; they are not chains of slaves, but of lords. They are collars of gold, that put no weight on them that wear them, but honor and dignity. It is very important to take these things, and things like them, in this way, because so taken they make the yoke of Christ sweet, as St. Ambrose observes. And the yoke of Christ is sweet if you take it as an ornament, and not as a burden.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Great Blessings That There Are in Religion, and the Gratitude That We Owe to God for Having Called Us to It

GOD is faithful, by whom ye are called to the society of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (I Cor. i. 9). One of the things that God enjoined upon the children of Israel when He led them out of the captivity of Egypt, was that they should remember the day on which so great a favor had been done them. And He enforced this injunction by ordering that every year they should celebrate a Passover to last eight days, with great solemnity, eating therein with great ceremonies a lamb in memory of that which was slain when they were delivered from captivity. If God ordered this in memory of the bodily deliverance, of which they did not make good use after they had received it, what will it be reasonable for us to do in memory of the day on which His almighty and loving hand drew us out of the captivity which our soul was in, and set us on the way of the Land of Promise, not of earth, but of heaven? So we read of the holy Abbot Arsenius that every year he celebrated the day on which the Lord had done him so great a favor as this drawing him out of the world. And the festive celebration that he made was to receive Communion that day, to give alms to three poor men, to eat some cooked vegetable, and to keep open house in his cell for all the monks to come in.

The blessed St. Augustine explains to this purpose what Moses said to Pharaoh when he wished the children of Israel to sacrifice to God in Egypt, and not go beyond its bounds to offer sacrifice. Moses said: "*That cannot be, for we should have to sacrifice to the Lord our God the abominations of the Egyptians* (Exod. viii. 26)—the cow, the calf, the lamb, which the Egyptians adore as gods; and it would be an abomination to them if they saw us killing and cutting the throats of the creatures they adore, and they would eschew us as blasphemers. We must needs go out of Egypt and come into the desert, to be able to sacrifice these things to God with impunity." So we have to sacrifice and offer to God our Lord what men of the world abhor and abominate—poverty, mortification of the flesh, obedience and subjection, being put down and despised, denying and breaking our own will. We could not sacrifice and offer these things to God in the world, which would hiss us and banish us and not suffer us to live, for people of the world abominate that sort of thing, and make game of the poor and lowly and humble. *We will go a three days' journey into the desert and there sacrifice to our God* (Exod. viii. 27). God of His infinite goodness and mercy has done us this favor of drawing us out of Egypt and bringing us into the desert of religion, where we are able with these three vows to offer and sacrifice to our God all these things with impunity, for here it is a great honor and great glory to do so, and he who distinguishes himself and is most eminent herein is most regarded and esteemed.

For the better understanding of the obligation under which we lie of paying our acknowledgments and thanks to the Lord for this favor and benefit, we will briefly set down here some of the good and excellent things by which the saints declare its greatness. The glorious St. Jerome on that passage of the Eightieth Psalm: *When the people went* *out of the land of Egypt, they heard a language which they knew not: the Lord delivered his men from their burdens* (Psalm lxxx. 6-7), enlarges on the great favor that God has done us in drawing us out of Egypt, that is, the world; he sets before us the captivity and servitude of Pharaoh in which we were, and the liberty of the sons of God to which we have been called. God has drawn us out, he says, and delivered us from a heavy yoke and burden. We were servants and slaves of Pharaoh there in the world; and God's strong and mighty hand has drawn us out of that servitude and subjection. When we were in Egypt, there in the world, we were building the cities of Pharaoh: all our work was to make bricks and be busy on constructions of clay and mud; all our time was taken up and all our care and diligence in looking for straw, straw that the wind carries away, straw to make bricks. We had no wheat; it was all straw. We had not that heavenly bread which comes from above. What a heavy load we had to carry uphill! What cares, what labors we had, all to get enough to eat, or at most to get some honorable office! And to uphold and carry that on, what difficulties there were, what applications to make to men in power, what formalities to observe, what compliments to pay, what laws of society to observe!—the stringency of which they alone understand who come under them. Truly it is a yoke of iron and heaviness that people of the world have to bear, struggling uphill. But God has taken off from our shoulders the heavy yoke of the laws and obligations and codes of the world. *Divertit ab oneribus dorsum eius*—"He hath taken the weight off his back" (Psalm lxxx. 7); and instead of this yoke of iron, He has put upon us a *burden that is very light, and a yoke that is very sweet* (Matt. xi. 30). God has brought us to a state where all our occupation is to be to love Him and serve Him.

The Apostle St. Paul says of those who are there in the world in the married state: *He that is married is solicitous* *about the things of the world, how to please his wife, and his heart is divided* (I Cor. vii. 32). Married folk are embarrassed with many cares; they have to meet liabilities for things of the world, for their property and family. The husband has to try and please his wife, and the wife her husband; they are taken up here and there and divided, and cannot give themselves wholly to God. *But he who liveth without wife is solicitous for the things of the Lord, how to please God. The unmarried woman and the virgin hath her mind on the things of the Lord, how to come to be holy in body and soul* (I Cor. vii. 33-34). He who is in the state of chastity devotes all his care how to please the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But if St. Paul says of him who is in the state of chastity there in the world that all his care has to be how to please the Lord and how to be holy in body and in spirit, what shall it be with religious, whom God has discharged and released from all the cares of the world, even from those necessary for their own support, that we may devote all our care to the matter of pleasing God more and being holier every day!

St. Augustine says that this is signified by the sacrifice that Abraham offered to God, which was a cow, a she-goat, a sheep, and further a turtle-dove and a pigeon; the land animals he divided into two halves, but the birds he did not divide, but offered them whole (Gen. xv. 10). By land animals, he says, are signified carnal men and men of the world, who are divided and split up into many parts; but by the turtle-doves and the pigeon, who are tame birds and do no harm to anyone, are signified spiritual and perfect men, whether they be solitaries and live apart from human society—and these are signified by the turtle-dove—or whether they deal and converse with men—and these are signified by the pigeon; these are not cut in twain or divided, but employ their whole selves in serving God entirely.

This, then, is the favor that the Lord has done to religious, that we offer ourselves to God wholly and entirely in a sacrifice and holocaust; we have no need to divide or portion ourselves out in other cares, but think solely how we may daily please God more and more. For this we make the vow of chastity, that, as the Apostle St. Paul says, having no companion to please nor family to govern, all our occupation and care may be every day to become better and more perfect. For this we make the vow of poverty, whereby we give up all worldly riches, and the desire and care and anxiety that they carry with them, which are the thorns of which Christ our Lord speaks in the holy Gospel (Luke viii. 7, 14), that prick and disturb. St. Ambrose says they are called riches because they divide the heart—*divitiae, quod mentem dividunt.* For this we have the vow of obedience, whereby we abandon ourselves and our own will and judgment, so that now we have no occasion to make plans or have any solicitude for what is to become of us, seeing that our superior, to whom we give ourselves over as holding the place of God, has taken upon himself this solicitude, so that we may be solicitous only for what touches our spiritual progress.

St. Jerome on that word of the psalmist: *Bless and praise the Lord, all ye his servants, who are in his house and dwell in his courts* (Psalm cxxxiii. 1-2), says that, as on earth a temporal lord has many servants who do him service, but makes a difference between them, inasmuch as he keeps some in his house, who are always with him, and others who are always in the country; so God our Lord makes a difference among His servants, some waiting always in His house and in His presence, and others at work in the country. Religious, he says, are the servants who dwell within the Lord's house, and wait ever in His presence and treat with Him every day; they are on the house-staff; but seculars out there in the world are as villagers and farm-servants. And he carries the comparison further. When the servants in the country, the farm-laborers and villagers, have any business with their master and any request they wish to gain of him, they take for intercessors and mediators the servants who enjoy his familiarity and are ever in waiting upon him and see him and speak to him every day. So worldly people, when they are in any necessity and wish to gain some favor of God, address themselves to religious, that they may commend the matter to God and offer prayer for that necessity, as being the Lord's close favorites, by whose mediation He is likely to grant them their request. Moreover, as it is the servants in the country who labor and plough and dig in order that others may enjoy the produce, being in the palace with their lord, so are worldly persons to religious. They labor and toil and bring in the fruit of their labors, and guard it with much care and solicitude, that religious may eat the same at their ease and leisure.

St. Gregory says that the same is given us to understand in the lives of those two brothers, Jacob and Esau, of whom Holy Scripture says: *Esau was a man skilled in hunting, and a cultivator of land; but Jacob was a simple man, dwelling in tents,* or as another version has it, *at home* (Gen. xxv. 27). By Esau, who went a-hunting and was a farmer, he says are to be understood worldly people, who are occupied and distracted with the exterior things of the world; and by Jacob, a simple man who lived at home, spiritual men and religious, who are always recollected and within themselves, taken up with what concerns their souls, and are the cherished favorites of God, as was Jacob of his mother Rebecca. Let us, then, consider here the great favor that the Lord has done us, Who has privileged us so highly above those of the world that they are like country folk and villagers, while we are like courtiers on the staff of His house. We may well say what the Queen of Saba said when she saw the order and goodly array of the servants of King Solomon: *Blessed are thy subjects, and happy thy servants, who stand before thee at all times and hear thy wisdom* (III Kings x. 8). Happy and blessed are religious, who are in the house of God and converse frequently with Him and enjoy His wisdom!

Hence we may infer how blind they are who think that they have done much for God in leaving the world and entering religion, and apparently would fain charge God with this, as though they had done something great for Him. You are quite out; it is you who have received a very great favor and benefit from God in His having drawn you out of the world and chosen you for His house in a state so high. You are the debtor, bound to gratitude and fresh service for such a great benefit. If the king were to call any knight to his court to give him a high office, the knight would not think that he was doing anything much in leaving his house and land, or that the king was much obliged to him and greatly in his debt. Rather he would take it that the king was doing him a great favor in deigning to make use of him and naming him to that post; and he would put down to his account that favor atop of the other favors that the king had done him, as an incitement to fresh gratitude and service. That is how we should behave. It is not we that have chosen God, but God that has chosen us (John xv. 16), and has done us this signal favor without merit of ours.

What didst Thou see in us, O Lord, that Thou chosest us rather than our brethren who were there around us? What was there in us that could please Thee? Something Thou didst see, since Thou hast chosen us. Something God saw that pleased Him, since He chose us. But someone will say: "Take care what you are saying, since theologians teach that there is no cause on our side for the predestination of God." The blessed St. Augustine explains this very well by a comparison. A wood carver passing by a mountain sees there the lopped trunk of a tree; he sets his eyes on it and stops. Is he pleased with it? He has a mind to make something of it, for he has not set eyes on it and been pleased with it to leave it there as it is, a rough, shapeless log; there in his artistic conception he sees what that log is to be. Oh, he says, what a beautiful figure shall be made of that trunk! That is what he loved, that is what pleased him—not what it was then, for it was but a log uncouth and unsightly, but the fair and perfect figure that he was minded to make of it. So, he says, God has loved us, wicked and sinful creatures as we were, not inasmuch as we were sinners, not as we lay, dry logs, unsightly and unprofitable; but the Sovereign Artificer looked upon this lopped trunk by the mountain sides, and thought of what He was to make of that trunk. That is what pleased Him, that is what satisfied Him—not what you were then, for you were but a dry log, shapeless and unsightly, but what He meant to make of you. The Sovereign Artificer, Who made heaven and earth, meant to make of this trunk a highly-wrought and finished figure. *Those whom he foresaw, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son* (Rom. viii. 29), an image like unto God Himself. That is what pleased Him, that is what gave Him satisfaction; for that He has cast eyes on you, for that He chose you. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and I have put you to go, and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain* (John xv. 16). See how like He has wished to make you to His only-begotten Son! He has chosen you for the same office for which His Son came into the world, to gain souls to God.

The same saint has a good discourse to this effect on the first verse of Psalm 136: *On the rivers of Babylon, hard by we sat and wept when we remembered Sion.* He says the rivers of Babylon are the things of this world, frail and perishable, which run and pass away so quick. But there is this difference between the citizens of Babylon and the citizens of Jerusalem, that the former are in the midst of the river of Babylon, plunged in the things of the world, in great storms and dangers; but those who have a mind to be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, seeing and considering the dangers of this river of Babylon, its winds and storms, its waves and fluctuations, its ebbs and flows, get out of it and have no mind to face those dangers, but seat themselves on its banks like the children of Israel. These are religious men who have fled from the dangers of the world, and are seated on the river banks, but weeping and lamenting. What are we weeping and lamenting for? In the first place, he says, we are lamenting our exile, seeing the waves and storms of this river of Babylon; and then remembering that heavenly Sion, our native city, we cannot cease weeping and sighing. O holy Sion, where there are no changes, nor reverses, nor dangers, but all remains forever firm, established in perpetual being! Who has flung us into the midst of these difficulties? How are we driven out and exiled from our country, from the society of our friends and from our Creator! When shall we see ourselves delivered from these dangers, when will this exile cease, when shall we be secure, when shall we see ourselves there at home?

Secondly, says the saint, we bewail those whom the current of this river carries away. There are our brothers in the midst of this river of Babylon, of the stormy sea of this world; waves and tempests carry them away, throw them on crags and rocks, and never cease till they plunge them in the deep. Every day we see them drowned in thousands, as St. Bridget says, who saw in spirit souls falling down like flakes of snow into hell. Who would not weep for so great a loss! What heart so hard as not to break with grief and compassion at the loss of so many souls!

In the third place, we are seated on the bank of this river of Babylon for the aid and benefit of our brethren, to succor and give a hand to them in danger, to see if we can fish out and save anyone who is in the way of being drowned. That is our proper business: *I will make you fishers of men* (Matt. iv. 19). God has stationed us for this purpose on this river bank of the Society to fish for souls, that from this point of vantage we may give a hand to those who are in danger of drowning. But here we have to consider two things. On the one hand there is the great favor that the Lord has done us, in marking us out and preferring us so much above those in the world that they are in the ring and we upon the platform, they are in the current of that river of Babylon in danger of perishing and drowning every moment, while God has set us upon the bank to do them good and lend them a hand to their rescue. On the other hand we must look to ourselves, and reflect that they who have to lend a hand to rescue and help those that are drowning in rivers, must themselves be very accomplished swimmers; otherwise they are likely to be drowned themselves. With the fury of death the drowning man seizes hold of his rescuer, and so they both go to the bottom. Great skill is required in the art of saving souls, and much virtue and perfection must he have who would rescue others from dangers without falling into the like himself.

It is related of the blessed St. Anselm that one day he was wrapt in ecstacy, and saw a river with a full volume of water and a strong rushing current, into which were poured all the filth and dirt and foulness of the whole round of the earth to such an excessive degree that you could not imagine anything in the world more noisome, filthy, and disgusting, or more insupportable than the waters that went down by that river. They were of such a furious nature that they carried away hopelessly all that they met, men and women, rich and poor, drowning them in their depths and plunging them in every moment, and with the same rapidity drawing them out, lifting them up and forthwith plunging them in again, without allowing them to rest for an instant. The glorious Anselm wondered at so extraordinary a spectacle, and asked what subsistence these people had and how they lived, for after all they were alive. He was answered that these wretched creatures fed on the very garbage in which they were plunged and drank of the same, and with all that they lived quite content. The vision was interpreted to him, and he was told: That torrent of a river is the world, in which blind men are carried headlong, wallowing in their riches and honors and their fleshly and filthy pleasures. So wretched is their condition that, though they cannot set foot in the midst of so much filth, nevertheless they live contented, and reckon and hold themselves for happy and fortunate people. The saint was then lifted up to an enclosure or garden of ample and spacious dimensions. The walls, covered with plates of bright silver, shone with wondrous luster. In the midst was a meadow or lawn, and the grass in it was no ordinary or common grass, but was made of the finest gold, yet fresh and soft to such a degree that pleasantly and without difficulty it received anyone who seated himself thereon, and with him bent down and bowed even to the ground; nor did it remain withered or injured for that bowing down, but when he who was on it rose up, it once more stood up of itself as it was before. The air was balmy and fresh; and, in short, everything was so pleasant and agreeable that it really seemed a paradise, and to leave nothing to desire in point of happiness. The saint was told that this was the religious state, portrayed to the life.

CHAPTER VII

Continuation of the Subject of the Previous Chapter

THE glorious Bernard sums up the great benefits of religious life very well in these few words: "In religion," he says, "a man lives purer, falls seldomer, and when he does fall rises quicker, walks more cautiously, is visited by grace more frequently, rests more securely, dies more confidently, has a shorter purgatory, and a more abundant reward in heaven"—*Vivit purius, cadit rarius, surgit velo-*

cius, incedit cautius, irroratur frequentius, quiescit securius moritur fiducius, purgatur citius, praemiatur copiosius. In another place, speaking of the high dignity of religious, he says: "Your vocation is very high, it rises above the heavens, it equals the angels, it is like to angelic purity, for you not only profess all sanctity, but the perfection of all sanctity. It is for others to aim at serving God, but for you to aim at being ever in union with God." And a little lower down he says: "I do not know by what name I can more worthily address you, as heavenly men or earthly angels; for, though you live on earth, your *conversation is in heaven* (Phil. iii. 20) ; *you are not of the world* (John xv. 19), *but fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God* (Eph. ii. 19) ; you are like those blessed spirits that are sent to guard and defend us, who so occupy themselves in those ministrations about us as never to lose sight of God." Such is the life of the religious, who, though he lives on earth, has his heart in heaven; all his thought and conversation is of spiritual things and God, so that he can say with St. Paul, *Christ is my life* (Phil. i. 21). As outside there in the world, when a man is much given to hunting and has a great taste for it, we say that hunting is his life; and when a man is much given to the vice of gluttony, we say that his life is eating and drinking, so the Apostle says, *Christ is my life,* because he was wholly dedicated and offered to the service of Christ. So is likewise the religious.

The glorious St. Bernard applies to religious these words: *Our bed is strewn with flowers* (Cant. i. 15). As there is no place where men take their ease more pleasantly than in bed, so he says that in the Church the bed on which ease is found is religion, for in it one is free from the cares of the world and the solicitude of temporal things and things necessary for human life. We have good experience of the favor that God has done us in this matter; for in the Society our superiors are most particularly charged to provide us with all things necessary for food and clothing, for study, for traveling, as well in time of sickness as in time of health. Thus we need not recur to our parents or relations; we leave them and we forget them, except to commend them to God. Whether we have any or have them not, whether they be rich or poor, the Society and its superiors are our father and mother; and with more than a father and mother's affection they take care to provide for all our temporal needs, so that we can afford to forget and disregard them, and attend solely to the end for which we came into religion, which is to labor for our own spiritual advancement and that of our neighbor. Clement of Alexandria says that it was for this purpose that God placed man in the earthly Paradise with possession and lordship of all things, that, having nothing to desire on earth, he might transfer all his desire to heaven. Now this is the idea of the Society. She engages herself to give us all that we need, to the end that, having no care of anything on earth, all our care and desire may be transferred to heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Renovation of Vows Practised in the Society, and of the Fruit Meant to Be Gained Thereby

WE read of our first fathers that, having met together in Paris on the day of the Assumption of our Lady, they went to the church of the same Queen of Angels, which is called Montmartre, that is, Martyrs' Mount, which is one league from Paris, and there, after having confessed and received the Most Holy Sacrament of the body of Christ our Redeemer, they made a vow to leave on a day that they appointed all that they had, without retaining more than the necessary journey-money for the journey to Venice. They also made a vow to employ themselves in the spiritual improvement of their neighbor; and to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, on condition that, once they had reached Venice, they should wait a whole year for an opportunity of embarking, and if they found such in the course of that year, they should go to Jerusalem, and having arrived they should endeavor to stay, and live always in those Holy Places; but if they could not find a passage in a year's time, or if after visiting the Holy Places they were unable to remain in Jerusalem, in that case they would go to Rome and, prostrate at the feet of the sovereign pontiff, the vicar of Christ our Lord, they would offer themselves for his holiness to dispose of them freely, wherever he would, for the good and salvation of souls. And these same vows they renewed again in the two following years on the same day of the Assumption of our Lady, in the same church, and with the same ceremonies. This was the origin of the renovation of vows, as practised in the Society before profession.

In the Fifth Part of the Constitutions, speaking of this renovation, our Father says: "This renovation of vows is not taking up a new obligation, but a calling to mind and confirmation of an obligation already undertaken." It is a repetition and confirmation of what is done, with satisfaction and rejoicing, as a sign and testimony that we do not find it irksome, nor repent of it, but rather are so glad and satisfied that we render many thanks to God for the favor that He has done us in taking us for His own and giving us grace to make this offering; and if we had not made it and had not offered ourselves, we would make it now and offer ourselves anew to God; and if there were a thousand worlds to leave for God, we would leave them all for His love; and if we had a thousand wills and hearts to give Him, we would give them all and offer them afresh. It is in this manner, with this joy and satisfaction, that this renovation should be made, and so it will be of great value and merit; for as complacency in sin committed and evil done is a new sin and offense against God, and deserving of new punishment, so satisfaction and complacency in a good thing done is very good and very pleasing and meritorious in the sight of His Divine Majesty. In the measure in which the doing was good, the complacency in the thing done is also good.

Coming down now more to particulars, our Father says that this renovation is made for three objects. First, for an increase of devotion, for this renovation is a source of no small but very great devotion, as is the experience of those who prepare for it well. Secondly, to awaken in us the memory of the obligation that we have contracted to God, that so we may be animated to go on carrying out what we have promised, endeavoring every day to grow in virtue and perfection. Thirdly, to steady us more in our vocation; for, as it is a remedy against all temptations to make acts of the contrary virtue, since maladies are cured by their contraries, so in resistance to inward stirrings of discontent or disgust, wherewith the devil sometimes assails us on various occasions that occur throughout the year, it is a great support to renew our vows. For thereby the enemy is weakened and loses heart to attack us with the like temptation; and if there has been any weakness on our part in the past, it is thereby made up even with advantage, for by it the soul is furthered in perfection.

Virtue and perfection is very uphill work to our depraved nature; for so great is the weakness and misery to which we are reduced by sin and so great the inclination which we have to what is imperfect and evil that, though sometimes we start our spiritual exercises with fervor, thereafter we come little by little to grow slack and relax the fervor with which we began, and return to our imperfection and tepidity; we are like the weights of the clock, that are always tending to go down. As our flesh is by nature taken from the earth, so it is always drawing us down thereto. Therefore it is appropriate to take certain times of refreshment, so that, if we were on the way to a fall, we may reverse our course. So our Father would have us particularly to take this refreshment twice a year by means of this renovation. So holy Mother Church has instituted two seasons in the year as two periods of refreshment to put new spirit into her children to begin to serve God, making a fresh start in fervor, to wit, Advent and Lent. Our Father in like manner would have us particularly twice a year refresh the memory of the offering that we have made to God and of the end for which the Lord has drawn us to religion, that we may renew ourselves therein and begin with fresh energy and fervor to aim at that to which the Lord has called us. And to that end he instituted such solemn celebrations as these in the Society, and that is the good that we should endeavor to get from them.

Not only at these times, but every day, our Father Francis Xavier used to say that we should make this renovation. In the "Collations of the Fathers" we read that the holy Abbot Paphnucius did so. Father Francis Xavier used to say that he had hardly found any means more efficacious, or defense stronger, for religious against the temptations of the devil and the flesh than the renewal of one's three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He advised its being done every morning after meditation, so to arm us against our enemies, and also after evening prayer. If we do not practise it so frequently as that, that is a good devotion which some have of doing so every time they communicate, and often to take account of themselves how they keep these vows, and whether there is anything that their conscience reproaches them with on that score.

The better to enable us to gain the end of this renovation, besides other corporal penances that are practised, such as abstinence and discipline, there goes before it in the first place a previous recollection of some days, during which we cease from our occupations and give ourselves more to prayer and spiritual exercises. In the second place there comes each one's giving an account of his conscience to the superior. Although this is done frequently during the year, it is then done with greater exactness, and comprises all the last six months. This is one of the substantial observances that we have in the Society, and we shall treat of it afterwards. The third thing previous to renovation is a general confession made by each renovant to any confessor that he shall choose out of those appointed for that purpose. This is an old custom of the Society, and we have a rule about it.

These means are very proper for the end proposed. For each one, making a review of all his faults, comes to know his improvement or falling-off in spirit. He looks and considers whether he has improved more in the last six months than in the six months preceding; and this comparison and juxtaposition of the present time with the time preceding helps much to make a person ashamed of himself if he sees that he is not improving, and to bring him to start afresh with new energy, since it was for no other end that he came to religion. Moreover, looking at his faults all together and, as they say, in cold blood, a man knows what passion wars upon him most and what humor is most predominant in him, and so he may take to heart and resolve upon the remedy, making his particular examen on that point. Moreover, as all this is seen and considered at this time of renovation of vows, when a man takes in review the mercies and benefits that he has received from God, and in particular his call to religion, and sees himself on the one hand so much bounden, and on the other that on his part there has been nothing but faults, he humbles himself before our Lord, and is moved to amend himself and make a fresh start henceforth. Contrary set upon contrary, like white upon black, comes out and strikes observation much more. Contrast the amount that you have received, and the amount of what God has done for you, with the amount of what you have done for Him; see what your receipts are and what your disbursements, and you will see what reason you have for shame and self-humiliation. What has resulted from such frequentation of sacraments, from so many penances and mortifications, from so much meditation, from so many examens, so many discourses and exhortations, so much spiritual reading? Into what abyss has all this gone? What is the profit that you have made of it? In this way each one should consider his faults when he prepares to give in his account and make his general confession, taking care to look and examine right well what is the outlet whereby all his fortune has streamed away and gone, to make sure of finding a remedy for it in future.

CHAPTER IX

Continuation of the Subject of the Previous Chapter

BESIDES what has been said, this renovation is also a thanksgiving for benefits received, according to the practice that we have described of the holy Abbot Arsenius. We keep feasts and festivals every year in thanksgiving and in memory and acknowledgment of a favor and benefits so great as that which the Lord has done us in drawing us out of the world and bringing us to religion—the beginning of all our good and a great mark of our predestination. As the Church every year keeps the feast day of the dedication of a material temple, so it is just that we should keep the feast of the dedication of our soul, which is the living temple of God. And since the best manner of returning thanks is by deeds, this renovation will be a very great and pleasing thanksgiving to God if it is done as it ought to be done, by taking care to renew and fortify ourselves more in our vows, and keep them more perfectly henceforth. This, as St. Gregory observes, is what the Apostle St. Paul says: *Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind* (Eph. iv. 23). And this is what our Father asks of us, a spiritual renovation, not merely an outward one done with the lips. When a picture is very old and faded, so that one can no longer see the outlines and figures, you restore it by putting on fresh colors and shades, whereby it becomes as pleasing and beautiful as when it was first completed. So we get old and worn out, our virtue fades away, because this corruptible body, our perverse and evilly-inclined nature, carries us off, seeking to make us fall in with its ways and follow its likings and desires. *The body with its corruption weighs down the soul* (Wisdom ix. 15). There is need for us to go back upon ourselves at times, and endeavor to renew and restore ourselves in our good purposes and aspirations. If we would have the hues of virtue not to fade in us, says St. Gregory, it is quite necessary every day to reckon that we are beginning afresh. Remember the resolution, fervor, and vigor with which you started this undertaking the day that you entered religion, and go to work now with that same intrepidity, energy, and keenness. This it is to renew ourselves, and this will be a very good thanksgiving for the benefit received, and highly pleasing to God.

Cassian recounts a brief and compendious exhortation which Abbot Pinutius addressed to a novice whom he was receiving in presence of the other religious, which each one may apply to himself, and it will greatly help him to attain the end of this renovation: "Take care never to take back anything of what you have renounced and cast off." You have offered and given yourself wholly to God and flung off all worldly things; beware of ever again taking up that which you have now renounced. You have renounced your property by the vow of poverty. Do not go back upon that by fixing your affections here in religion on little things and childish trifles; for it will profit you little to have given up great things if here you get a passion for small ones. You have renounced your will and judgment by the vow of obedience; see that you do not take it up again, but rather say with the spouse in the Canticles: *I have stripped me of* *my coat, how shall I put it on?* (Cant. v. 3). I have stripped and denuded myself of my own will and my own judgment; God grant that it may never come back to be mine again. You have renounced and flung away the enjoyments, comforts, and amusements of the world and of the flesh; take care that they find no entrance into your soul in future. You have given up and scorned the vanity and pride and good opinion of the world; see that such things never come again to revive and rise from the dead in you, when you see yourself a senior, when you see yourself a priest, when you see yourself a doctor or preacher. Make it a matter of great account never again to rebuild or re-erect what you have thrown down and destroyed, for, as the Apostle says: *If what I have cast down I again build up, I make myself a prevaricator* (Gal. ii. 18); for that would be to prevaricate and go back after having *put your hand to the plough* (Luke ix. 62). Persevere to the end in the poverty and abandonment of all things which you have offered and promised to God, and in the humility and patience in which you persevered so many days, begging with many tears that they would receive you into religion.

St. Bernard, St. Basil, and St. Bonaventure add another reason. See that you are not your own, but all that you are and all that you have is God's, since you have already offered it and wholly made it over to His Majesty by the vows that you have taken. Wherefore beware of once again seizing upon and taking back what you have already given away and offered, for that would be theft, theft being "laying hands on what is another's against the will of the owner"—*contrectatio rei alienae invito domino.* Have we not said above that he who enters religion gives to God the tree along with the fruit? Now, if you give to another a tree to transplant into his garden, and afterwards take the fruit, that would be theft. But that is what a religious does who does his own will and not that of obedience; nay, it would even be, they say, a sacrilege, for it would be stealing a thing that has been offered and dedicated to God; and such theft would be a sacrilege, a thing that God greatly abhors. I am the Lord *who love justice, and hate rapine in a holocaust* (Isaias lxi. 8). But who would dare to steal from a holocaust that is wholly God's and already offered and dedicated to His Majesty? St. Bernard says that there is no worse sacrilege: "No crime of sacrilege is worse than this of resuming the dominion of the will that you had offered to God by vow; for the greater the thing offered, the graver the theft of taking it back?" Let us add here what is added in the law of holocausts. So much did God insist on the holocaust's being wholly offered to Him and burned and consumed in His honor, that He gave command that, after it had been offered and burned, they should once more offer and burn the ashes, in order that, if there had remained any piece of fat, or any particle of bone, or any fragment of rib, it should be all finally consumed and reduced to ashes in honor of God. *Even to the very embers thou shalt cause it to be consumed* (Levit. vi. 11).

St. Augustine explains to our purpose that text of Genesis (ii. 15): *God took Adam and put him in the earthly paradise to work and keep it.* Let us see, says the saint, what it is that the Holy Ghost means by this. Can it be that God would have Adam exercise there a husbandman's office, and dig and cultivate and work the land? It is not to be believed, he says, that before his sin God should oblige and condemn him to this labor. Although some exercise by way of amusement and recreation, such as amongst us many owners are wont to take in their gardens and orchards, was not inconsistent with that state of innocence, yet to have it put upon him by way of forced labor and necessity did not suit that state, nor was there any need of it, since the land of itself yielded crops without that labor. And besides, what is the meaning of saying that God put Adam in Paradise to keep it? From whom was he to keep it, since there were not at that time any enemies or other races of men that he could possibly fear? And as for beasts and animals, there was just as little reason for his keeping it against them, since before sin animals did no harm to man or his possessions. And if he had to fear them, one man alone could hardly keep such a large piece of ground as Paradise was, and drive off such a multitude of living creatures as there were there. He would have had to fence it in with a fence so extensive that the serpent could not have got in; and, before making such a fence, he would have had to drive out the serpents and other beasts that were inside. The meaning cannot be that God put man in Paradise to keep it bodily, or to dig and plough it. What, then, is meant by the phrase, *to work and keep it?* Do you know what? says the saint. God put man in that Paradise to do the work of precepts and commandments that God had given him, and by doing that work to keep it for himself, and not lose it, as he did lose it, by not doing the work. Now to apply this to our purpose. Why do you suppose God has put you in this paradise of religion, paradise as the saints call it with much reason? Do you know why? That you may work out and fulfil the precepts and commandments of God, and the counsels of His Gospel that we have in our rules; and that by doing that work you may keep and preserve this paradise for yourself, and not lose it, as others have lost it because they would not keep it.

St. Augustine gives another explanation of these words. He very well observes that Scripture does not say *ut custodiret paradisum,* but *ut custodiret illum,* where *illum* may represent not *it* (paradise), but *him* (the man himself). And this sense pleases the saint better. God put man in Paradise, not that man might work at and cultivate Paradise, nor keep it, but that God might work and keep man himself there. As it is said that man works the land, not making it to be land, but making it fertile and fruitful by his labor and cultivation; so with greater reason God, Who created man out of nothing, may be said to work on man when by that work He makes him just, holy, and perfect. Thus, then, God placed man in the earthly Paradise to work on him there and perfect him, until He should translate him from the earthly to the heavenly paradise, bringing him to the state of everlasting bliss. In the same way do not you suppose that God has placed you in this paradise of religion for you to work on it and keep it—it has another and better gardener, and a better keeper and defender—but for Him to work on you, to make of you a mortified man, to make of you a spiritual man, to make of you a holy and perfect man, and so to keep you till He translates you from this earthly to the heavenly paradise.

With these and the like reasons and considerations we should help ourselves to answer to this great favor and gather the fruit of this renovation. If there is put before you the hardship of religious life, remember the great reward and recompense to be given you for it, for it *hath a great reward,* as the Apostle says (Heb. x. 35). The blessed St. Francis used often to say, thereby to exhort and encourage his religious: "We have promised great things, but greater things are promised us." Let us keep our promises, and sigh after what is promised. And when the friars make their profession, offering and making promise of their vows to God, the superior says: "I, too, promise thee life everlasting." I, then, also promise you on the part of God life everlasting, if you keep what you have promised; and that with a bond under the hand of Christ Himself, Who says in the holy Gospel: *And thou shalt have treasure in heaven* (Matt. xix. 21). Thou shalt have a treasure; thou shalt be great and glorious in the kingdom of God.

NINETEENTH TREATISE

ON THE VOW OF POVERTY

CHAPTER I

That the Vow of Poverty Is the Foundation of Evangelical Perfection

BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. v. 3).

With these words Christ our Redeemer opened that sovereign Sermon on the Mount and the eight beatitudes. And though some doctors and saints explain these words as applying to humility, others with much reason understand them as recommending voluntary poverty, especially that which we religious profess. And in that sense we will take them here, which is the sense of St. Basil and of many other saints. It is no small praise of this poverty of spirit that Christ our Redeemer began with it that sovereign sermon and put it for the first of the beatitudes. But a greater praise of it is that He taught it all His life by word and example. This was the first lesson that great Master read us at His birth from the chair of the manger. That is what was taught us by the stable, by those poor swaddling clothes, by the need that He had of the hay and the breath of beasts to warm and cover Him. It was also His last lesson—a lesson which, to impress it more upon us, He would leave behind Him, reading it to us from that other chair of the Cross, dying stripped and in extreme poverty, so that for His shroud they had to buy a winding sheet as an alms. What greater poverty could there be than that? And as was the beginning and the end, so was the whole tenor of His life, for He had not a shilling to pay the tribute that they demanded of Him (Matt. xvii. 24-27). He had no house to rest in, nor room to celebrate the Passover with His disciples, but all had to be lent him. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head* (Matt. viii. 20).

The Redeemer of the world would lay poverty for the foundation stone of evangelical perfection, saying: *If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor* (Matt. xix. 21). And to enforce this counsel, He would leave it confirmed and authorized by His example. Thus we see what a settled thing this foundation of poverty was in the primitive Church, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles; for at that time there was no *mine* or *thine* among the faithful, but all was in common, since all who had houses or inheritances or other possessions sold them and took the price of them and laid it at the feet of the apostles, and out of that fund distribution was made to each according to his need (Acts ii. 32). St. Jerome observes that they laid it at the feet of the apostles, to show that riches are to be trampled on and despised and thrown underfoot. And St. Cyprian, St. Basil, St. Jerome, and others say that the faithful at that time made a vow of poverty, and they prove it by the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, who, because they had hidden away part of the proceeds of the sale of their inheritance, were punished with sudden death, which is a sign that they were under a vow, otherwise they would not have deserved so severe a punishment. The Church, then, being taught this divine doctrine, the saints and all the founders of religious orders lay down the vow of poverty as a necessary and most firm foundation of their orders. So our Father, following this ancient doctrine, begins to treat of poverty with the words: "Poverty, as a firm wall of religion, must be loved and preserved in its purity as far as ever shall be possible with the grace of God." Poverty is the wall and foundation of a religious house. Contrary to the way of the world, in which the foundation of rights of primogeniture and estates is property and riches, with us it is the other way about. The foundation of the religious state and of the height of perfection is poverty; for, as the building that we have to erect is different from the buildings of the world, the foundation also is different.

This is what Christ our Redeemer wished to teach us by those comparisons which He draws in the holy Gospel, saying: *What man is there who, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and reckon the cost, if he have sufficiency for it, lest after he hath laid the foundation, and hath not wherewith to finish it, all who see it may begin to scoff at him, saying: This man began to build, and had not wherewith to finish. Or what king, going to war with another king, doth not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able, with ten thousand men, to meet him who cometh against him with twenty thousand; otherwise, while he is still afar off, he sendeth an embassy and asketh for terms of peace* (Luke xiv. 28-32). Thence he concludes and draws the inference: *So then everyone of you who doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple* (xiv. 33). Hereby He gives us to understand that what for fighting purposes is the size of the army, and for building purposes the abundance of funds, poverty and the renunciation of the things of the world are for spiritual building and spiritual warfare. So the blessed St. Augustine explains it, saying that by the building of this tower of the Gospel is signified the perfection of Christian life; and the cost and capital needed to build it is the renunciation of all things; for in that way a man is more free and disengaged to serve God, and better secured against his enemy, the devil, by presenting less surface for his enemy to attack him and make war upon him.

St. Jerome and St. Gregory, following out this argument, say that we have come into this world to wrestle with the devil, who is naked and possesses nothing in this world. It is necessary for us also to strip ourselves of these worldly things to be able to wrestle with him. For if a man with his clothes on wrestles with another who is naked, he who has his clothes on will soon fall to the ground, because he gives the other a hold to overthrow him. Would you fight manfully with the devil? Off with your clothes, strip yourself of all earthly things, let the devil get no hold upon you to make you fall. For what are the things of earth but as clothes to the body? He who has more of them will all the sooner be overcome, because he gives the devil a greater hold to seize him and throw him to the ground. St. Chrysostom asks how it is that Christians in the primitive Church were so good and fervent, while today they are so slack and remiss; and he answers that it is because then they went out to wrestle with the devil naked, stripped of their goods and estates; while today they go out heavily clad in benefices, estates, and honors, and all this clothing gets in their way and hinders them terribly. That is why we religious give up riches and divest ourselves of all the things of the world, that so we may be free and unimpeded in our wrestling with the devil and our following of Christ. The wrestler is stronger in the struggle for being stripped; the swimmer divests himself of his clothes to pass the river; the traveler travels more lightly for leaving behind him his burden and wallet.

On this account the first vow that we make in religion is of poverty, as the foundation of all the rest. As St. Paul says that *covetousness is the root of all evils* (I Tim. vi. 10), so poverty is the root and foundation of all good things and all virtues. St. Ambrose enlarges upon this. As riches are the instrument of all vices, because a man with money in his pocket has the wherewith to carry out his desire in the matter of all the vices and sins that he has a mind for, so the renouncing and divesting of oneself of all things for Christ engenders and preserves all virtues, as may be seen by running through the list. St. Gregory says: *Paupertas bonis mentibus solet esse custodia humilitatis*—"Poverty, to good minds, is apt to be the guardian of humility." As for chastity, it is easily seen what a great help poverty is, and austerity in diet and in dress, which makes also for abstinence and temperance. And so we might run through all the virtues. Therefore do the saints call poverty sometimes the mistress and guardian of virtues, and sometimes they call it their mother. And our Father uses this latter appellation in his Constitutions: "Let all love poverty as their mother;" for poverty, like a good and true mother, engenders and preserves in our souls the rest of the virtues and keeps afoot religious discipline. So we see that the orders which have given up poverty have given up religious life; they are as children that are not like their mother. Let us, then, cherish this holy poverty as a mother, which means not any sort of love, but an intense love, a tender love, a love accompanied by reverence and regard. The blessed St. Francis spoke of *Lady Poverty*. And in the Rule of St. Clare it is said: "We bind ourselves to our Lady, Holy Poverty."

CHAPTER II

Of the Great Reward Wherewith the Lord Rewards the Poor of Spirit

THAT young man in the Gospel who desired perfection and was not content with keeping the commandments, was sad and went off when the Lord told him that, if he desired to be perfect, he must sell all that he had and give to the poor. He had many possessions, and was attached to his property, and had no heart nor pluck to leave it. There was wanting in him the capital necessary for building the tower of evangelical perfection (Luke xiv. 28). That the like may not happen to us, and that we may have courage and strength to renounce all things of the world and break with it altogether, and be very glad to have done so, Christ our Redeemer puts before us the great reward we shall gain thereby. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 3). See if it be a good investment to give all things of earth for the kingdom of heaven; and whether he would be a wise trader, who should divest himself of all things to gain this treasure. St. Bernard observes that in this beatitude our Lord speaks, not in the future, as in the others, but in the present: *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The kingdom is already yours although they have not yet made it over to you, because you have bought it at the price of the things you have given up. It is as though you had given a hundred guineas for a piece of gold plate or for a precious stone, which the seller still keeps in his house. That piece of plate is yours, though they have not yet handed it over to you—yours because you have laid down the price in money for it. Thus the kingdom of heaven belongs to the man who is poor in spirit. He has bought it and given all he had for it. *The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls: having found one precious pearl, he goeth and selleth all he hath and buyeth it* (Matt. xiii. 45-46). So you have made the kingdom of heaven your own, since you have given all you had for it.

The promises of Christ do not stop there. He promises more than that to the poor in spirit. But can there be anything more than the kingdom of heaven? Yes, because there are promotions there in heaven, as there are here on earth for good soldiers; and He promises to the poor in spirit a promotion and pre-eminence high above the rest. Upon the departure of that young man who would not abandon all he had, Christ our Redeemer observed how difficult it was for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, whereupon St. Peter stood out from the number of the rest and said: *Lord, we have left all things, and followed thee: what then shall we have?* He answered: *Amen, I say to you that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His majesty, ye too shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt. xix. 27-28). The saints declare that this dignity and pre-eminence is to be understood as belonging to all those who have imitated the apostles in the state of poverty, confirmed by vow, such as religious who die in the grace of God. They say that they will all hold this pre-eminence and dignity; that at the day of judgment they will not stand before the divine tribunal so much to be judged as to be assessors in judgment with Christ, and as such to approve and confirm the sentence of our Savior. So say expressly St. Augustine, Bede, St. Gregory, and it is the common opinion of the doctors. They apply this text of Isaias: *The Lord will come in judgment with the ancients and princes of his people* (iii. 14); and what Solomon says in Proverbs, speaking of the Spouse of the Church: *Her husband is noble in the gates, when he shall sit with the senators of the land* (xxxi. 23). Those they say are *the princes* that are to come to judge along with Christ; and the *ancients* and *senators,* who are to be seated with the Spouse of the Church, that is, Christ, at the last day of judgment. And though some wish to assign this dignity to all the canonized saints, yet the common opinion, which St. Thomas follows, is that they only will hold this dignity who have professed the state of poverty, even though they are not canonized. And theologians and saints allege many reasons and very good arguments from the fitness of things why this pre-eminence should be assigned to them who have made profession of voluntary poverty rather than to the rest of the blessed. St. Gregory very aptly cries out here with the prophet: *Exceeding honor, O Lord, thou hast done to thy friends. O Lord, their rule has been extraordinarily strengthened* (Psalm cxxxviii. 17). Blessed and praised be Thou, O Lord, Who hast thus honored Thy friends, particularly those who have made themselves poor for Thy love, since, not content with giving them the kingdom of heaven, Thou hast made them such great and eminent princes therein as that they shall be universal judges of the whole earth along with Thee.

CHAPTER III

That God Rewards the Poor in Spirit Not Only in the Next Life but Also in This

THAT you may not think that all your reward is made out to your account for the next life, and fancy that your pay is credited to you with a long time to run before it is due, whereas you pay your contribution in money down on the spot, I say God rewards the poor in spirit not only in the next life, but also in this, and that very handsomely. We men are so self-interested and so moved by the present and visible that, when that does not come to hand, we seem to have no heart left to do anything. God takes account of our weak nature and would not even in this life leave without reward those who renounce all things for His love. So He adds immediately beyond the promise mentioned: *And whoever for love of me shall leave house, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children, or any property or inheritance, shall receive a hundredfold, and afterwards life everlasting* (Matt. xix. 29). The hundredfold is to be understood of something that he shall receive in this life, and after that, in the next world, life everlasting. So Christ Himself declares by St. Mark (x. 30) : *There is none that hath left house,* and so forth, *for me and the gospel, but shall receive a hundred times as much now at this time, and in the world to come life everlasting.* You shall not only receive the reward of life everlasting hereafter, for having made yourself poor for Christ, but you shall receive a hundredfold in this life. St. Jerome explains this *hundredfold* of spiritual goods. He says: "He who leaves temporal goods for God shall receive spiritual, which in comparison with those others is receiving a hundredfold." But Cassian explains it of temporal goods themselves. He says: "Even in these we religious receive a hundredfold in this life, according to the words which the Evangelist St. Mark there puts into the text." We see this accomplished quite to the letter, and every day we say to fresh comers into religion: "You have left one house for Christ, and you have ever so many houses. All the houses of the order are yours; God has given you them in this life for the one that you have left. You have left a father and a mother, and God has given you in their stead so many parents who cherish you more than those whom you have left, take more care of you and see better what is for your good. You have left your brothers, and you have found here so many brothers who love you more than they did, because they love you for the love of God without any interested motive of their own. You have left sundry servants in the world—and perhaps you had not any—and here you have so many to serve you—one as bursar, one as dispenser, one as cook, one as refectorian, one as infirmarian; and what is more, if you travel to Castille, or Portugal, or France, or Italy, or Germany, or the Indies, or any other part of the world, you will find that they have there already set up for you a house with ever so many attendants, who will serve you with the same care and diligence, so that there is no prince on earth who is so well off." Is not that receiving a hundredfold in this life, and more than a hundredfold?

Then what shall I say of the very things that you have left? Even in that respect you have here much more than in the world. God gives you in this life a hundred times more than you have left. You are more master of the possessions and riches of the world than the rich themselves. They are not masters of their estates and riches, but you are; they are servants and slaves of them. Holy Scripture calls them *men of riches* (Psalm lxxv. 6); it does not say *riches of men,* but *men of riches,* to give us to understand that money is their mistress, since it is she that orders them about, and they are her servants and slaves. For her they serve, for her they labor—to acquire her, to increase her, to keep her. And the more property and riches they hold, the more slaves they are, since they have to spend more care and labor over what they have. *The fullness and abundance of the rich suffereth him not to sleep,* says the Wise Man (Eccles. v. 11). On his bed at night he goes rolling over from side to side, because his estates and riches drive sleep away from him. But how free is the religious from care! Without reckoning whether things are dear or cheap, whether it is a good year or a bad one, he has everything he wants, *as having nothing, yet possessing all things,* as the Apostle says (II Cor. vi. 10). Thus religious live at ease and without care, as having nothing. How, then, about contentment? There is given us a hundred times more than what we had in the world. If you do not believe that, ask folk in the world and those who are best off there, and you will see how many untoward occurrences and disappointments they meet at every step, from which religious are quite free. How, then, about honor? You come in for a hundred times more here in religion than you would have found there; because the nobleman, the prince, the prelate, who there in the world would have taken no notice of you, now, when he sees you wearing an old patched habit, does you much honor and shows you great respect. How, then, about leisure, quiet, and tranquillity? In everything God gives us a hundred times more in religion.

But why all this? Do you know why? That, being unembarrassed and unencumbered by things of earth, we may put our whole heart in heaven; that the solicitude and care that we should have had to take over things of the world, and in the quest of what is needful for the support of the body, we should exchange for the care of pleasing God more and more and growing every day in virtue and perfection, according to the saying of the prophet of the children of Israel: *God gave them the regions of the nations and the labors of peoples, that they might keep his commandments and observe his law* (Psalm civ. 44-45). This is also what God says by the Prophet Ezechiel, speaking of priests: *Let my priests not have any inheritances, since I mean to be their inheritance. Give them no possessions in the land, since I am bound to be their possession* (Ezech. xliv. 28). For this, then, do we leave our inheritances and possessions, because God wishes to be our inheritance and possession. Happy lot of the religious, in that such an inheritance and possession has fallen to him! The lot of our inheritance has come to fall to the best advantage; we have come off well, since to our brethren there has fallen earth, and to us heaven. *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance* (Psalm xv. 5), *God of my heart and my portion forever* (Psalm lxxii. 26). The blessed St. Francis used to say that poverty was a heavenly and divine virtue, because thereby men despised and trampled underfoot all earthly things and rid themselves of all lets and hindrances, to the end that their soul, free and unshackled, should be at liberty to attend only to the things of heaven and union with God.

CHAPTER IV

In What Poverty of Spirit Consists

IN these words, *Blessed are the poor in spirit* (Matt. v. 3), Christ our Redeemer clearly defines in what consists the perfection of that poverty which we religious profess. Poverty of spirit means poverty of will and affection. The outward act of abandonment of property and worldly wealth is not enough; we must abandon such things in heart also. Poverty of spirit means detachment of heart from all things here below, that freely and without impediment we may follow Christ and give ourselves wholly over to seeking perfection, which is the end at which we aim and for which we came to religion. St. Jerome marks this well in the answer of Christ our Redeemer to St. Peter. Peter had said: *Lord, we have left all things.* And Christ answered: *Verily I say to you that ye who have followed me shall sit judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt. xix. 28). Observe, says the saint, He does not say simply, *ye who have left all things,* but *ye who have followed me.* Leaving all things was what Diogenes also did, Antisthenes, and many other philosophers. Among them St. Jerome tells of a Theban named Crates, that, being very rich, and intending to go to Athens to give himself to philosophy and virtue, to the end that riches might be no obstacle to his course, he sold all his inheritances and possessions and, gathering from the sale a great quantity of gold, he flung the whole mass into the sea, saying: "Go into the depth, ye wicked covetous desires; I will drown you, that I may not be drowned by you." Of another philosopher named Phocion, a man of great distinction in his poverty, it is related that, when Alexander sent him a great sum in gold, a hundred talents, that make in our money 600,000 crowns [$125,000], he asked those who brought it: "Why did Alexander send me this?" They answered: "Simply for your virtue and because he takes you for the best and most virtuous man among the Athenians." The philosopher said: "Then let me remain so," and he would on no account receive the money. This act and speech was so celebrated among the Greek philosophers that for a long time no other question was discussed among them than who had been the greater, Alexander, or Phocion, who had despised the riches of Alexander. If you take me for a good and virtuous man, let me be so and do not send me riches to hinder me. There are many instances given of this.

On the other hand, St. Augustine and St. Jerome say that it is not the gold either nor the silver that does the harm; and they quote the example of many saints and patriarchs of the Old Testament who were very rich, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the patriarch Joseph, who was second in the kingdom of Pharaoh and held command over the whole land of Egypt; and Daniel and his three companions, who held high office in Babylon, as did Mardochee and Esther in the whole kingdom of Assuerus; David, Job, and many others who in the midst of the riches and pomps of the world held to the principle of poverty of spirit, since their heart was not wedded and attached to such things, and well observed the advice of the prophet: *If riches flow in, set not thy heart upon them* (Psalm lxi. 11).

But, coming to our point, there are two requisites for this poverty of spirit which we religious profess. The first is that we should actually renounce and leave all the things of the world, as we do by the vow of poverty. The second is that we should leave also all affection for such things, that our heart may be disengaged and free to give itself entirely to God and to perfection. St. Thomas says that the first requisite, the actual giving up of things, is in view of the second, that so we may more easily give up affection for them, the one being a very efficacious means to the other. For this he quotes St. Augustine's saying: "Earthly things, when we hold and possess them, carry away the heart more;" and so it is more difficult to lose affection for them than when we have them not. It is much easier not to crave after what one does not hold than to give up what one holds already. What one does not hold is cast off for a foreign thing; but what one does hold is like a thing united and incorporated in self. As St. Thomas says, leaving it is like cutting a limb off, a very sensible and painful operation. St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory treat this subject very well, commenting upon those words of the Apostle St. Peter. St. Jerome says: St. Peter and the rest of the apostles were poor fishermen, who gained their livelihood by the labor of their hands and had nothing but a miserable pittance, an old boat and some greatly mended nets; and yet with all assurance they say, *Lord, we have left all things.* St. Gregory answers that they are right in saying so; since in this matter, my brethren, we should look rather to the heart than to the goods that are given up. He leaves much who has got nothing left; he leaves much who leaves all, be it little or much. We are much attached at heart to what we possess and to the desire of what we do not possess. Now the apostles left much because they not only left what they had, but also the desire of having. He leaves much who leaves all that he has, and therewith the desire of having. St. Augustine says the same. The apostles were right in saying that they had left all things, though they had only a few poor boats and some rotten nets, since "he leaves everything in the world and despises it all, who despises not only what he has, but also all that he could desire"—*Revera omnia contemnit, qui non solum quantum potuit, sed etiam quantum voluit habere contemnit.*

This is a great comfort for those of us who leave little because we have not more. St. Augustine says, speaking of himself, after he had sold and left what he had: "Not because I was not rich shall less be put down to my credit, for neither were the apostles rich; but he leaves all the world, who leaves not only all that he has, but all that he could desire"—*Non enim quia dives non fui, ideo minus mihi imputabitur; nam nec apostoli, qui priores hoc fecerunt, divites fuerunt. Sed totum mundum dimittit, qui et illud quod habet et quod optat habere dimittit.* A man gives up as much for God, as for God's sake he ceases to desire; and so you have left all the world and all things in it if you have quitted the affection and desire, not only of what you had and might have had, but also of all that you could have wished for and desired; and so you may well rejoice and say with the apostles: *Lord, we have left all things for thee.* And he who had much there in the world should not make more of himself on that account nor think that on that account he has left much; for he leaves little, if he does not leave off the desire of all that he could wish for and desire. Much more has another left, in that he has abandoned the desire of all things in the world.

In this, then, consists the essence of this spiritual poverty, in this renouncement, disregard, and contempt of all things, trampling all things of the world under our feet and, as though they were dung, saying with St. Paul: *I reckon all things as dung that I may gain Christ* (Phil. iii. 8). We should trample on all things, and despise and hold them for nothing, to gain Christ.

These are the poor in spirit whom He calls blessed, and with much reason, not only because theirs is already the kingdom of heaven, as we have said, but also because they begin from now to enjoy a very great satisfaction, a state of happiness and blessedness on earth. Happiness does not consist in a multitude of possessions; it consists, says Boethius, "in having everything that one wishes for, and wishing for nothing that one ought not to wish." This the poor in spirit have, more than the rich and powerful of the world. The poor in spirit have all that they desire, because they desire nothing beyond what they have; with that they are content and desire nothing more; rather it seems to them that they have too much of everything. But the rich men of the world are never satisfied or content. *The miser will never have enough of money* (Eccles. v. 9); avarice never says, "It is enough," for these things never can avail to satisfy the appetite, but rather stimulate and increase it. As the dropsical man, the more he drinks, the more he thirsts, so the miser, the more he gets, the more he covets what he is short of, taking no account of what he has, but considering what he might have. What he is short of gives him more pain than all his wealth gives him pleasure. Thus he spends his whole life in pain and torment, a-hungering and longing and striving to get more.

It is related of Alexander the Great that, hearing the lecture of a philosopher named Anaxarchus, who discussed and argued the existence of infinite worlds, he began to weep; and when his attendants asked him what he was weeping for, "Don't you think I have reason to weep," he said, "seeing that there are so many worlds, as this man says, and we have not been able to make ourselves masters of one?" The desire of what was wanting to him gave him more pain than all his conquests gave him satisfaction. On the other hand, that other philosopher, with one old cloak and a poor mantle, went about as cheerful and gay as though it were always Easter time for him. He was more satisfied and content and rich in his poverty than Alexander with all the world at his beck. And Diogenes the Cynic said a very good thing to the same Alexander, as St. Basil relates. Alexander came to this philosopher in his poverty and said to him: "You seem to me to be in want of many things; ask, and I will give you them." The philosopher replied: "Sire, who do you think is in greater want, I who want no more than my cloak and my wallet, or you who, being King of Macedon, expose yourself to such danger to enlarge your kingdom, and the whole world is hardly enough to satisfy your desires? I am richer than you are." St. Basil says that was a good answer, and so it was; for tell me, who is the richer, he who has a surplus or he who has a deficit? Clearly, he who has a surplus. Now this philosopher reckoned that he had enough and more than enough, and lacked nothing of what he wished for, seeing that he wished for no more than he had; while much was wanting to Alexander the Great, considering what he desired and wanted to have. Thus the philosopher was richer than Alexander, and more was wanting to Alexander than to the philosopher.

True wealth and happiness and contentment in this life do not consist in great possessions, but in the fulfilment of one's desires and the satisfaction of one's will; nor does poverty consist in the want of things, but in hunger and desire for getting them and insatiable thirst for having them. "Away from that," says Plato, "anyone who is good will also be rich." St. Chrysostom brings a good comparison to illustrate this. If a man were very thirsty and, after drinking one jug of water and another, could not satisfy the burning thirst that he felt within him, we could not call such a one happy and blessed for the mere fact that he had great abundance of water to drink. More happy and blessed should we hold him to be who was not thirsty and had no craving for drink. The former is like a dropsical man or a man in a high fever, and the latter like one in sound and good health. This, then, is the difference between those who yearn after riches and fortune and the truly poor in spirit who are content with what they have got and desire nothing of this world. The latter are healthy, the former sick; the latter are satisfied, the former hungry and thirsty; the latter are rich, the former poor. This is what the Holy Ghost says by Solomon: *What meaneth all this, that he who hath nothing is very rich; and he who hath ample property and wealth is as a needy poor man, ever hungering after and desiring more, and fancying that he is always short of something?* (Prov. xiii. 7). Do you know what it means? This is the misery and wretchedness, the "damned spot" that riches and goods of the world always carry with them, that they cannot satisfy nor give contentment; and this is the happiness and blessedness that poverty of spirit carries with it, that it puts its possessors in the blissful state of beginning to enjoy from henceforth an extreme satisfaction.

It is related of Socrates that he used to say: "God has need of nothing; and he is most like God, who has need of the fewest things and is content with the fewest." Passing through the market place and seeing the multitude of things sold there, he was wont to say, talking to himself: "What a lot of these things I have no need of!" The ignorant common herd and the avaricious and covetous, when they see such a multitude of things, sigh and say: "How many things I am short of!"

CHAPTER V

Of Religious Who, Having Left Greater Things, Get a Passion in Religion for Lesser Things

FROM what has been said it follows in the first place that, if we who give up the world with its property and riches do not also give up affection for those things, we are not poor in spirit, since that poverty consists not merely in a bodily and external separation from the things of the world, but further in a detachment of will and affection from them; and this is the main point of poverty in spirit. If there still remains in you a passion for those things, you have not left them altogether, but have brought them with you into religion, since you carry them in your heart. Thus you are not truly poor, but only in outward pretense; and consequently not a true and perfection religious, but a pretended one. It is only in body that you are in religion, but in spirit and heart in the world; you falsely bear the name of religious.

Secondly, it follows that a religious who has given up and despised the wealth and riches of the world, and here in religion gets a passion for little things, for a room, an article of clothing, a book, a picture, and other like things, is not truly and perfectly poor in spirit. The reason is the same as above; for the essence of poverty in spirit consists in giving up affection for the things of the world and having the heart detached from them; whereas this man has not given up this affection, but that which he had for those things in the world, here in religion he has transferred and changed to little things, and his heart is as affectionated and attached to those trifles as it was there in the world to wealth and riches.

Cassian treats this topic very well. I know not, he says, how to characterize a ridiculous thing that happens with some religious, that after they have left the property and riches that they had in the world, we see them in religion so careful and solicitous about little things and trifles, seeking and trying after superfluities and ill-placed conveniences to such a degree that sometimes the affection and solicitude which they have for these things are greater than what they had in the world for their entire estate. Little will it profit these people, he says, to have given up much property and great riches, since they have not given up their affection for them, but have only transferred and changed it to these small trifling objects. The covetous affection which now in religion they can no longer exercise on costly articles, they keep and exercise on things trifling and cheap, clearly showing thereby that they have not given up the covetous affection, but changed and transferred it to these childish trinkets. They keep the same covetousness here as there, as though the evil lay in the gold or in the difference of metals and furniture, and not in the passion and affection of the heart; or as though we had left great things to set our heart on trifles. We did not leave those great things for that. We left and broke with greatness that here it might be the easier for us to despise the less. Otherwise, if the covetous affection keeps its hold on our heart, what matter does it make to me whether it be about great things or about cheap and small things, since we are here as affectionated and attached to those little things, and our heart as taken up and hampered with them, as it could have been about great things? It all comes to the same, when you cannot see the sun for having a plate put before your eyes, whether the plate be of gold or iron or tin; the one is as much of an obstacle as the other.

Abbot Mark says the same in a consultation or colloquy that he holds, conversing with his soul. "You will tell me, my well-beloved, that we do not gather gold or silver, we have no inheritances or possessions; and I will answer thee that it is not gold or inheritances that do the harm, but the ill use of those things and the disorderly affection for them." So we see that some rich people pleased God and were saints, as were Abraham and Job and David, because they did not fasten their heart and affections on their riches. But we, without having riches, having already given them up, keep up and maintain the vice of covetousness over base and good-for-nothing things. We do not gather gold or silver, but we get together cheap knick-knacks and set our heart upon them and bear them as much affection as we did gold and silver in the world; and here we worry sometimes as much about these things as we should have done there in the world about those other things, and perhaps more. We do not come in for bishoprics, nor aim at dignities, nor ambition such things as that; but we desire the petty compliments and good opinion of men and take all possible means to secure them; we rejoice in being praised and well thought of by people in the house as much as worldly persons do by those around about them.

More miserable and more worthy of reprehension are we, say these holy men, than are people in the world, for having brought ourselves down to a lower level than they. For when men of the world set their heart on anything, it is on things that seem of some consideration and value; but we, having given up those things, fix our affections on cheap and petty objects. We have turned children. We should have gone on making ourselves men, and perfect men, growing every day, as St. Paul says, *unto a perfect man* (Eph. iv. 13), and we are doing just the reverse. Of men, strong men, that we were when we entered religion, leaving all things in the world and breaking manfully with it all, we have made ourselves babies, setting our hearts on the toys and baubles of children. And as the baby, when you take away its apple and its plaything, begins to cry, so these folk, when you deprive them of the trifle that they had set their hearts upon and do not grant them what they ask for, at once bristle up and speak out their mind. It is just as Cassian says—on the one hand it is a thing to make you laugh, and on the other it is a sad and pitiful sight, to see a grave personage, a religious, who to be sure had the heart to despise the world and all that it contained, come to be such a slave of mean and petty objects and be as much upset and put out as a baby, because they refuse it an apple, because they have taken away a toy.

The glorious St. Bernard, writing to some religious, says: "More miserable are we religious than all the rest of mankind if in religion we are to seek these childish trifles and for them lose all merit of what we have given up and done hitherto. What blindness, or to say better, what madness and folly it is for us, who have given up greater things, to come to be enslaved to things so mean and worthless, to our own so great loss and detriment!" Would you see the loss? says St. Bernard. "We have despised the world and all things in it; we have left our parents, relations, and friends; we have shut ourselves up in monasteries and bound ourselves to perpetual imprisonment, to be ever under lock and key and a doorkeeper; we have given up our own wills and bound ourselves ever to follow the will of another. What should we not be ready to do, not to lose so many great merits!"

CHAPTER VI

Of Three Degrees of Poverty

THE saints and masters of spiritual life lay down three degrees of poverty. The first is that of those who outwardly have left the things of the world, but not inwardly; they have not left them with their will, but remain attached to them. Of such we have already said that they are not truly poor, but pretenders to poverty, and falsely bear the name of religious. The second degree of poverty is of those who have left all things in effect and will, and also here in religion have given up affection for superfluities, but hold strongly by necessary things. They take care that nothing be wanting to them of which they stand in need. They like to be well served all round, in food, dress, lodging, and everything else, and when anything is wanting there, they resent it and complain. That is not perfect poverty. St. Bernard says very well: "It is a sad thing to see how many there are today who glory in the name of poverty, but wish to be poor on such terms as never to be short of anything, but to have everything well up to the mark. This is not poverty but riches, and indeed riches so great as even rich folk in the world have not." For they suffer many inconveniences in these things, sometimes for not getting all they want; at other times, to save expense, they suffer more than we do for love of virtue; at other times, though they have the money and spend it, they do not succeed in making their servants do everything to their taste. And you a religious, you who profess poverty and have made a vow of the same, you want never to feel the pinch of necessity or suffer anything! This is not being a lover of poverty, but a lover of your own conveniences and of having all things up to the mark. There in the world perhaps you would have had much more to go without. It is not right that here in religion, where we come to mortify ourselves and do penance, we should seek more comfort and more conveniences than what we had there.

If, then, we wish to attain to the perfection of this poverty of spirit, and realize to the full the name of religious, bringing our life into accordance with the name that we bear, we must endeavor to move on to the third degree of poverty, which is poverty of necessary things; "for he who is truly poor makes little account even of what is necessary"—*vere enim pauper etiam necessaria parvi pendit.* We must give up any affection, not only for things superfluous and useless, but also for necessaries, so that in them also we should be poor and show in them an affection and desire for poverty. And now that we cannot dispense with and abandon them altogether, at least let us take what is "necessary" charily and strictly, reducing it to the narrowest compass we can, rather than extending it and giving it liberal measure, rejoicing always to suffer something herein for love of poverty. A saint says it is only then praiseworthy to be a poor man when, besides being very poor, one loves the poverty one suffers and rejoices in it and gladly bears the shortages that go with it for love of Christ. He, then, who wishes to see whether he is poor in spirit and is advancing in that virtue, should see whether he rejoices in the effects of poverty and her friends and companions, which are hunger, thirst, cold, weariness, nakedness. See whether you rejoice in an old garment and a patched shoe; see whether you rejoice when you miss something at table and they forget you, or things are not served so much to your taste; see whether you rejoice when your room is not so comfortable; for if you do not rejoice in these things and love them not, but rather shun them, you have not attained to the perfection of poverty in spirit. This point we shall further enlarge upon.

CHAPTER VII

Of Some Means to Arrive at Poverty in Spirit and Preserve Ourselves Therein

IT will aid us much to the attainment of poverty in spirit, and keeping it, if in the first place we attend to what our Father says in his Constitutions: "Let none have the use of anything for his own." He explains this by a comparison. He says that a religious in all that he has the use of should reckon that he is clothed and dressed out like a statue, that makes no resistance when they take its dress off. In this way you should regard the dress that you wear, your book and breviary and everything else that you use, so that, if they told you to give it up or to exchange with another, you should feel it no more than a statue feels it when they strip it of its clothing. If this be the way you hold it, you do not hold it as your own. But if, when they bid you go out of such a room or give up such an article or exchange it for another, you feel great repugnance and difficulty and are not like the statue, it is a sign that you take the thing for your own, since you feel so aggrieved at the loss of it. Therefore our Father wishes superiors sometimes to prove and test their subjects in the virtue of poverty and in the virtue of obedience, as God tested Abraham, that they may see what virtue each one has and give him occasion to grow more and more in it. It is an excellent way of testing us and a means very appropriate to the end we are speaking of, to deprive us of what we have and make us accept something else instead. Speaking of affection for these things of earth, St. Augustine says: "When we have a thing, we often think we do not care for it; but when they offer to take it away from us, then we come to know what we are." If, when you part with a thing or they offer to take it away from you, you feel repugnance and difficulty, and perhaps hesitate about giving it up, it is a sign that you are attached to it, since grief and feeling hurt arise from attachment. St. Augustine says: "When it gives us no pain or trouble to part with a thing, it is a sign that we are not attached to it and have no affection for it; but when it is a pain and grief to leave it, it is a sign of the presence of such affection." It is, therefore, an excellent practice of superiors from time to time to exercise us in these things, making us change rooms and move from a room in which perhaps we were very comfortable and very fond of it; or making us part with a book or exchange an article of clothing, that we may not get any prescriptive right to anything; otherwise, a certain sense of proprietorship may come in little by little and undermine this firm wall of poverty. So we read that this practice was very much in use amongst those ancient Fathers, to the end that their religious might not get an affection for things or regard them as their own.

We read that this is how St. Dorotheus acted with his disciple St. Dositheus. He would give him a garment or vest and make him sew and trim it very neatly, and then, when he had fitted it nicely to his own size, he would take it from him and give it to another. This book of St. Dorotheus is very much in accordance with our manner of proceeding and descends to many minute particulars. It is related there that St. Dositheus was infirmarian, and one time set his heart on a knife, and asked for one from St. Dorotheus, not for himself, but for use in the infirmary. St. Dorotheus said to him: "Do you like the knife, Dositheus? Which would you prefer, to be a slave to this knife or a servant of Christ? Are you not ashamed that this bit of steel shall lord it over you?" Oh, how many times might we say that to ourselves! Are you not ashamed that a trifle like this should be your master and drag and twirl you about? So he said to him: "Never touch it again." And he never did touch it again. Let us not take these things for pieces of childishness or things of little importance. St. Jerome says admirably well in a similar case: "To those who do not understand the meaning of virtue, and have not attained to the perfection and purity thereof, perhaps these things will appear a nursery game and of small importance. But they are not; they are points of great perfection and holy wisdom, hidden from the wise and prudent of the world, and revealed and manifested to the humble and simple of heart."

The second thing that will help to preserve us in poverty of spirit is not to have anything superfluous. This is a special point in which the Lord has shown peculiar favor to us in the Society; for our rooms are like that which Holy Scripture says the Sunamite woman prepared for the holy Prophet Eliseus. The prophet often passed by her house, and she said to her husband: *Let us make him a little chamber, and put in it a bed and a table and a chair and a candlestick, that when he comes to us he may lodge there* (IV Kings iv. 9-10). That should be the furniture of our rooms; a bed, a table, a chair, and a candlestick; only what is necessary. It is not our custom nor are we anywise allowed to have cells furnished with pictures, portraits, and the like, nor to keep in them spare chairs, nor an elaborate writing desk, nor a carpet, nor a curtain in front of the door; nor can we keep in our cell a little jam or any other delicacy wherewith to regale ourselves, or to comfort and entertain those who visit us. Even to get a drink of water we have to ask leave and go to the refectory; nor may we have a book in which we are allowed to make a mark, or carry the book away with us. Undeniably this is great poverty; but it goes along with great relief and great perfection, for these things beyond a doubt take up much of a religious' time and get in his way, since the having of them and keeping of them and adding to them clearly must cost care and distraction. The not being allowed to have such things (as they are not allowed amongst us) puts an end to all those inconveniences.

One of the reasons why in the Society outsiders are not allowed to come into our rooms, besides other undesirable consequences that such entry would lead to, is because our poverty can thus be better preserved. For, after all, we are men, and if the knight, the merchant, the literary man, whose confessions we hear, were to come into our room, I do not know whether we should have virtue enough to be satisfied with the poverty that reigns there, but we should like to keep it better furnished with books, that from my books at least he might take me for a learned man and a very consequential person. Thus this rule is a great help to keep us in our poverty and hinder us from having superfluities, and we should highly esteem it accordingly, and see that it is kept up.

Another good means to preserve ourselves in this holy poverty, and a very praiseworthy practice, is that of some religious, to carry off to their superior all their little things that they call their pets, and dispossess themselves of them, though they be things that they might keep lawfully and in conformity with obedience. It is told in the chronicles of the Order of St. Jerome that at their beginning this usage was quite common, and so much care was taken that no religious should have anything superfluous or curious that, when there was found in the possession of anyone any article that was curious and not religious, they all met in chapter and made a great fire in the middle, and there they burned it, for these holy men said that such things were the idols of religious. Now this is what we ought to imitate; all things that are not necessary we should banish from our cells and rid ourselves of them entirely, taking them and offering them to the superior without any hope of their ever coming back. And to do that it is not necessary that we should have any affection for them; it is enough that they are superfluous.

St. Bonaventure adds another remark, that he did not approve of our keeping such little things, as some do, to give to others as prizes, or to win them over, or under color of devotion; because, after all, these things take up the heart and are a cause of distraction. Besides, it is making ourselves singular and marked off from the rest, because it seems that this is the man in the house who keeps a shop for these things and to whom all ought to have recourse. There is also, says the saint, another disadvantage in the practice, which is that often these things are given away without leave, sometimes without looking into the matter, sometimes out of shame of having recourse to the superior about these childish gewgaws. So it comes at times that others also receive them without leave, for not daring to say no and put the giver to the blush; and this is a cause of disedification on one side, and scruple and remorse on the other. There is this further undesirable result, that these gifts and little presents are wont to foment particular friendships and familiarities, to the prejudice of union and fraternal charity. For these reasons, says St. Bonaventure, such doings do not meet with the approval of our elders. And so it is also in our order, because, though this is permitted in some by reason of their ministries, in others, however, we well know that it does not please superiors nor edify our brethren. A religious ought to be so poor as to have nothing to give. And this is what edifies; while those who are fond of having little things to give away neither edify nor are well thought of; and that is the reason why in this matter we follow the counsel of St. Bonaventure.

It will also help much to our purpose to bring forward one thing in which the virtue of holy poverty shines out greatly, and by the blessing of the Lord is well practised in the house; it is that we do not keep our rooms locked, and no one without special leave of the superior can have a writing desk, or box, or anything else locked; all is open to the superior's eyes. Thus, in the very way in which we hold what we do hold and use, we seem to say: "There, take it if you will." St. Jerome insists on this point. "Let there be no need of keys, that from the very exterior look of things it may be shown that we have no outward possessions but only Jesus"—*Nihil habetur extrinsecum praeter Iesum.*

And while everything is so open and exposed, by the goodness of the Lord, it is quite safe as regards those of the house. That we might observe this regulation with facility and security, our Father has laid down in the first place a rule, that none shall enter another's room without leave of the superior. That is one lock, or key, whereby our room is like to be better secured than by a key of iron. He laid down also another rule, that no one should take anything out of another's room without leave of the superior. That is another strong lock and key. And above all this the seal is set by the vow of poverty, again a very strong fastening. With these three locks and keys so strong, our room and all its contents, for all its being left open, is better secured, so far as the inmates of the house are concerned, than if it were closed with gates and bars of iron. And we should all make an effort that it may remain so, and continue in future times. He would be worthy of heavy punishment who by his audacious violation of the rule should anywise impair the plainness, simplicity, and perfection which mark the Society's manner of life, or risk any alteration in a thing so holy and in such a brilliant display of the virtue of holy poverty. Against such offenders St. Basil and St. Bonaventure inveigh strongly in good round terms.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Another Means That Will Greatly Help Us to Attain Poverty in Spirit and Keep Us in the Same

IT will also be a great help to us to preserve us in poverty in spirit and attain the perfection thereof, not only to rid ourselves of superfluous things, but to take care, even in necessary things, which we are obliged to make use of, to make the virtue of poverty conspicuous, that in all things we may appear poor men, as we are. Our Father commends this to us in his Constitutions. "Let the diet, dress, and sleeping accommodation be such as becomes poor men, and let each one persuade himself that the worst things in the house will be given to him for his greater abnegation and spiritual profit." And in another place he says: "Let all love poverty as a mother and, according to the measure of holy discretion, in proper season let them feel some effects of it." Our holy Father would have us desire the poorer and the worse, but he would not have us evaporate wholly in desires, but sometimes feel indeed the effects of poverty.

Thus, though the necessaries of life be not wanting to you, you have always room in this matter to give proof of the virtue of holy poverty. And not content with saying this in general once or twice over, he afterwards, in the Sixth Part of the Constitutions, sets himself expressly to declare what our clothes are to be like. That they should be, on the one hand, religious and suitable to our ministries, and at the same time conformable to the poverty we profess, he says that these things are to be observed in them: first, that they be decent, because we are religious; secondly, that they fall in with the usage of the country in which we live, because our manner of life is common as to the exterior; thirdly, that they be not contrary to poverty; and he declares there that they would be contrary to poverty if they were made of very costly cloth. Therefore, though parents, relations, friends, and penitents were anxious to give a religious fine cloth, he must not have his clothes made thereof, because they would not be the clothes of a poor man, nor in accordance with our Constitutions. Some say that it is a saving to have one's clothes made of good material, because it lasts twice or three times as long, and so makes for poverty. But these are fleshly and worldly reasons. It is much more important that poverty be conspicuous in the clothes we wear, and that we look like poor men, and go about dressed as poor men, for such we are; this, I say, is more important than any amount of saving. Further, not only in the quality of the cloth, but also in the cut of the coat, poverty should be well marked. If one selected a garment very full, ample, and dignified, it would not be the habit of a poor religious. There are two things only that our Father would have us make account of in dress, proper decency and protection against cold, for to these two objects were clothes instituted and that is their end. It is the doctrine of St. Basil, who quotes to this effect the saying of St. Paul: *Having food and wherewith to be covered, with that we are content* (I Tim. vi. 8). Let us be content with having food to sustain us and clothes to cover us. A holy man observes: See what he says: *food,* not dainties and delicacies; and see what he says, clothes *wherewith to be covered,* not to look smart. We should be content with bare necessaries; and for the rest, all that savors of dignity and ostentation should be banished from religious life and nowise tolerated, since it is vanity and profanity. Let all that be cast out; let not the world come upon us here.

Oh, how the glorious St. Francis dreaded that even in his order! It is related in their chronicles that Friar Elias, a leading man in the order, who became minister general, had a habit made for himself, full and ample, with long sleeves, and of costly stuff. St. Francis called him in the presence of many friars and told him to lend him the habit that he wore. The saint put it on over his own, making proper folds of the train and arranging the hood and turning up the sleeves with gestures of vanity, and so began to march about with his head high and his chest thrown out, stepping out with a fine pontifical strut and saluting the friars present in a deep sonorous voice: "God save you, gallant gentlemen!" The religious stood staring with astonishment at what the saint did and said. That done, in a transport of fervor and zeal, he hastily pulled off the habit and in utter scorn flung it far from him, and said to Friar Elias in the hearing of them all: "The bastard sons of the order are clad in that fashion." So he stood up in his habit, humble and unostentatious, straight and short, and resuming his air of cheerfulness and mildness, he began to talk to his friars with great humility and familiarity, teaching them entire meekness, poverty, and humility.

Let us not, then, be bastard sons of our order, but legitimate sons, in all things like to our mother, holy poverty. Our clothes should be in the style of the poor; poverty should be conspicuous in them and show that we are poor men. And to that end they should be even less than what we might decently wear, and even less than what the opinion of the world might think necessary for us. He cannot be called poor in dress whose dress is abundantly complete in all that can be called necessary; he shows no sign of being a poor man to whom no detail of what is necessary is wanting. That is why we said above that perfect poverty meant rejoicing in having to suffer and endure some flaw and shortcoming even in the supply of things necessary, and that he who had no mind to suffer and endure any want had not attained to the perfection of poverty in spirit.

What is said of clothes must be understood of all other things of which we have the use. We must take care that the virtue of holy poverty is apparent in them all, and that it may easily be seen that we are poor men. Thus in our room we should not keep anything but what is necessary, and that of the meanest; the poorest table, the most tumble-down bed; the worst furniture in the house you must covet to have for yourself; and as for books that are not quite necessary, off with them to the library, and do not make a parade of learning by piling up books in your room. St. Bonaventure enters into minute details here, earnestly charging religious to keep only necessary things and with them taking care that they be not works of art, but rough, what will just do, old and mended. Do not look to it that your books be very well bound, or that your breviary or Horae Diurnae be a curiosity of workmanship or a thing of singular elegance. Do not carry about with you curious pictures, nor a rosary of any considerable worth and value; and if you do have any Agnus Dei or any cross or reliquary for your own devotion, let it be conformable to the poverty that we profess; and the poorer you are in this respect, the more pleasing you will be to God and His saints.

The blessed St. Francis used to say that to keep curious and unnecessary things was a sign of a dead spirit. When the spirit is tepid, and the ardor of grace has died down, with what can it cover and entertain itself, he says, but with these trifling things? As it finds no comfort in spiritual things, it seeks it in these outward objects of interest. This is a great truth, well borne out by experience; and that is why our superiors make so much account of these small things, for one reason, because they touch poverty, and for another, because there is no life of the spirit where one busies himself with the like things. And even in necessary things, as we have said, we ought to be poor and appear so, and be glad to suffer some diminution in them, the better to imitate Christ our Lord, Who, being rich and powerful, made Himself poor for love of us (II Cor. viii. 9) and chose to suffer such lack of necessary things, suffering hunger, thirst, cold, weariness, and nakedness. St. Bernard says: "In heaven there was great abundance of good things and riches, but no poverty was to be found there. Here on earth there was great abundance of that commodity, but men did not know its worth and value. What, then, did the Son of God do? As a wise merchant His heart went out to that commodity and He took in a store of it, that so men might know and value it and also take in a store of it, seeing that it is worth so much in the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER IX

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the book of the illustrious men of the Cistercian Order there is a story of the abbot of a monastery in Saxony who was not content to clothe himself with the cloth of the neighborhood, but sent every year to Flanders for pieces of fine costly cloth and clothed himself therewith. When the abbot died the monks divided his clothes among them, and the prior of the monastery took for himself one of his tunics and put it on, one solemn night, in honor of the solemnity of the feast. But no sooner had he done so than he felt as though they were applying plates of hot iron to his flesh, and began to cry out that he was burning, and flung the garment off at once, and all saw that it sent out sparks of fire, as though it were a red-hot iron. Astonished and dismayed at this, all those who had taken any of father abbot's clothes brought them at once to the spot and made a heap of them; and there began to come out and rise sparks of fire in all directions, as from a burning furnace. This went on long enough for them to be able to give notice to all the neighboring abbots, and they came and bore witness to this so fearful judgment of God.

Caesarius relates how a knight having done many wrongs to a Benedictine community in France, the religious determined to dispatch a monk to King Philip to complain of the wrongs they suffered. They chose for their envoy a young monk of noble family, hoping that the king would give him favorable audience for the sake of his high connections. Coming into the king's presence, he said to him: "There is a man who has done great injuries to our monastery, and I beg your highness to restrain him and make him restore the goods he has taken away." The king eyed him, and his habit and appearance, and asked him who he was, and learned that he was the son of a well-known knight. He led the conversation to other subjects until the monk said to him: "Sire, the truth is that this knight has carried off all that we had in the house and left us little or nothing." The king replied: "That may easily be seen in your shoes, which would not have been so pinched if he had left you a little leather. As you are more nobly born than the rest, you ought to be more humble." Wishing, thereupon, to soothe him, he added: "Take not my warning ill; I do it for your good. Return home, and I will make sure that this person gives you no more trouble." A similar story is told by Caesarius of another Philip, King of the Romans, who gave the same answer to a Cistercian abbot who was talking to him about the needy condition of his community. The king, looking at the shoes he wore, very close-fitting and tight, said to him: "It is quite evident that your house is very poor from the way you are shod, since even leather is dear." Whereat the abbot was much annoyed.

It is related of the blessed St. Francis in his chronicles, that a guardian, very intimate with the holy father, founded an oratory for the friars hard by which he made a cell, a little way apart, in which the saint could stay and make his prayer. The cell was of timber, worked with an adz only. When Father St. Francis came to the place, they took him to the cell, and Father St. Francis said: "Brother, if you wish me to dwell in this cell, make within it a lining of osiers and branches of some trees, that I may see in them poverty." And when that was done, he stayed in the cell for some days.

Of our Father Francis Borgia we read in his Life that in all things he showed himself a truly poor man and a perfect lover of this virtue. It appeared in his dress, food, bed, and lodging, and even in very minute things, as in the paper that he used for his sermons, in the fire that was made for him in a case of necessity, and like things, so much so that he could never be prevailed on to accept new shoes or new stockings. They once tried to play a trick upon him, putting new shoes in the place of the old ones before he got up, but it availed them nothing. When he went begging alms, he ate with more relish the scraps and bits of bread that he or others brought in preference to the whole loaves that were put on the table. On his journeys, though they were ever so long and laborious, or his health ever so weak, he would not allow of there being carried with him a clean pair of sheets for his personal use, fearing that this might be to the prejudice of holy poverty. He often slept in barns upon the bare tiles in cold weather, with the wind coming in in many directions, and that with such cheerfulness and rejoicing as to strike amazement and shame into his companions. His overcoat and raincloak, in winter as in summer, was his mantle, doubled and lined inside, to keep it from wearing out. It was the greatest difficulty imaginable to get him to wear high boots, or other defense against the rain. He would say that a broad-brimmed hat was protection enough against sun and rain. Besides, it often happened that he came to inns, soaked through with water and pierced with cold, and great was his joy, when he arrived in that condition, to find that there was no good accommodation at the inn. In no sickness, and in no weather, however severe and cold, would he allow any curtain to be fastened about his bed or in his room; he thought it a great luxury to have a little mat fastened at the head of his bed. All this was the more pleasing and admirable in him, considering the high estate he had left in the world.

CHAPTER X

To What and How a Religious Is Bound by the Vow of Poverty

IT remains to say to what the vow of poverty binds us in strictness, and when one would sin against it, and when it would be a mortal sin, for it is reasonable for a religious to understand the obligation he is under by being such, and by reason of the vow that he has made. At other times we treat of matters of perfection; here we will treat of what is of obligation, which must always come first and is, as it were, the foundation on which all the rest is built. We will gather together with all possible brevity what the doctors say on this point, as well theologians as jurists, drawn from the canon law and the writings of the saints.

The vow of poverty of itself binds a religious to have no dominion nor ownership, nor the use of any temporal thing without the lawful permission of the superior. This is the common opinion of all the doctors and is expressly laid down in the sacred canons. Hence it follows, first, that a religious is bound by his vow of poverty not to hold, or possess, or give, or take, or receive any temporal thing to keep, or use, or dispose of it, without leave of his superior, because all these are the acts of one who is, or may be, proprietor or owner of the thing; and so he who should act thus would act against the vow of poverty. This is the inference and assertion of all the doctors, and is expressed and declared in the sacred canons.

Secondly, it follows that not only would a religious act against his vow of poverty by taking, or retaining, or giving away, or disposing of anything of the house without leave of the superior, but also by receiving anything from outsiders, relations, friends, or penitents, and retaining or disposing of it without leave of the superior. This is also the common opinion of the doctors, and is laid down in the canon law as a thing certain.

These are the principles and foundations of all this matter, and upon them we shall rest all that is to be said, drawing conclusions from these principles in resolution of particular cases that may occur.

Our Father in his Constitutions, dealing with this matter, puts before us and explains it all; and it is drawn out in the Rules that we may have it before our eyes. It is said in the Twenty-sixth Rule: "Let all understand that they cannot lend, or take, or dispose of anything in the house without the superior's knowledge and consent." And that no one might think that the only thing against poverty was taking or disposing of anything in the house without leave of the superior, but as for receiving from persons outside, or disposing of what was received from them, without leave, such a proceeding would not be against the vow of poverty, he further enforces this second point in another rule: "No one shall take to himself anything of the house, or from the room of another, or receive anything in any way from an extern, whether for himself or for another, without leave of the superior." In these rules our Father briefly sums up what is that to which our vow of poverty binds us in all rigor.

But we must here observe that none should fall into the mistake of thinking that it is no sin—or at least no mortal sin—to break these rules, on the ground that our Constitutions and Rules do not bind under sin. A man might deceive himself in this way, saying: "I quite see that one acts against the rule by receiving anything from another or giving anything; but as our Rules do not bind under sin, I do not think that it would be a sin, but only the breaking of a rule." It is true that our Rules and Constitutions do not bind under sin, as our Father declares in the same Constitutions (p. vi. cap. 5), but the vows that we take do clearly bind under sin, and that sin is mortal of its own nature. And so our Father declares, that no one may pretend ignorance or take occasion to err, although the thing is clear in itself. As a religious who should violate chastity would sin mortally against the vow he had taken thereof, and that would be a new sacrilege, so he who should violate the vow of poverty would sin mortally against his vow of poverty. Of that there can be no doubt. It was in your power to have remained where you were in the world with your property, and used it at your discretion, and not to enter religion, nor make any vow of poverty. But now that you have entered and made that vow it is no longer in your power to receive a shilling, or keep it without leave, because you are bound to that by the vow you have made.

This is what the Apostle St. Peter in the Acts said to Ananias and Sapphira, who had made a vow of poverty, as the saints observe, and had sold an inheritance that they had, and then, in bringing the price to the feet of the apostles as the others did, kept and reserved for themselves a part of the price, and said that they had not sold it for more than they presented. St. Peter said: *Ananias, why* *hath Satan tempted thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the land? Remaining, did it not remain to thee; and sold, was it not in thy power? Thou hast not lied to man but to God* (Acts v. 3). And God's chastisement fell upon him immediately; he fell down suddenly dead, and the like happened presently to his wife, who had shared in the offense; *and great fear fell upon the whole Church, and upon all who heard these things* (Acts v. 11). So it is reasonable that great fear should fall upon us of doing anything against the vow of poverty, seeing that it is punished so vigorously.

Now, coming back to the point, I say that if there were nothing more than a rule there, the breaking of it would not be a sin; but when the Constitutions or Rules contain and declare the matter of a vow, they express an obligation under sin, not by any force of their own to bind you under sin, but by reason of the obligation of the vow that binds in that way. It is as when rules contain and declare any matter of chastity or natural law; they tell of an obligation under sin, not by virtue of the rule, but by the obligation which chastity or the natural law of itself carries with it. And because these rules tell and declare the substance of the vow of poverty, and what it is to which the vow binds of itself; therefore, he who breaks these rules will sin, not by breaking the rule, but by breaking the vow of poverty which the rule declares. So the having of these rules before our eyes should not serve to give us occasion to think that it is only a rule, but to let us know from the outset that we have here a summary and abridgment of the substance of the vow of poverty, and of what it binds us to in all rigor, drawn from the canon law and all the doctors, as we have said. St. Augustine says, speaking of religious who live in community: "It is certain that they ought to have nothing, possess nothing, give or receive nothing, without the superior's leave," which is our rule letter for letter. This, then, it is to be poor; and for one to be able of his own will, without leave from another, to take, or give, or hold, or dispose of anything, is to be a proprietor, and, consequently, against the vow of poverty.

That this, which must be taken as a first principle in this matter, may be better understood, it must be observed that the distinction which doctors, theologians, and jurists draw between use and dominion—between being the owner of a thing and having only the use of it—is that the owner of a thing can commonly do what he likes with it. He can give it to whom he likes, lend it, sell it, spend, or dispose of it as he thinks good. But he who is not absolute owner, but has only the use of the thing, cannot dispose of it as he likes; he cannot give it to another, nor sell it, nor alienate it, but only use it for the purpose for which it was granted him. They illustrate this by an example. When one man invites another to dinner, he only gives him leave to eat there in the dining room of all that is put before him, but he does not make him master of the viands laid on the table. He cannot carry them off to his house, nor send them to another friend, nor sell them, nor make of them what he likes; he has only the use of them to eat on the spot what he wishes; and, therefore, they say that use is distinguished from dominion, even in things that are consumed by use, and that the first use. In this relation doctors say that private religious stand, even as regards those things which they have with leave of their superiors. The only thing allowed them is the use of those things, to avail themselves of them and benefit by them. But it is clear that you cannot give to another the habit and dress that you wear, without leave of the superior, because it is not yours; and if you were to give it without leave, you would act against the vow of poverty, because that would be making yourself absolute master of the thing, since you do with it what you will. And what I say of this is to be understood of all the other things that we have; you cannot give another your breviary, nor your writing case, nor your hat, without leave of the superior, since nothing of that is yours; they have granted you the use of it only for yourself, as in the case of a guest invited to dinner. Let us always remember that example, since it is very proper and illustrates the matter well. And if of the things which a religious has with leave for his own use we say that he cannot do what he likes with them, nor give them to others, it is clear that still less can he give, take, or dispose of other things of the house without leave of the superior, in the way of taking anything from the clothesroom, library, refectory, dispensary, or other place, either to give to another or for his own private use; that would be still more clearly against poverty.

CHAPTER XI

Explaining How It Is against the Vow of Poverty to Receive or Give Anything without Leave of the Superior, Even though the Thing Be Not Belonging to the House

WE have said that it is the common opinion of doctors that not only is it against the vow of poverty to take anything of the house for your own use, or give it to another, without leave, but also to receive anything from another without leave of the superior. Thus, if a friend, or penitent, or your father, or relation, gives you anything to buy a coat or a book or anything of the sort, and you receive and keep or use it without leave of the superior, you will sin against the vow of poverty, whether you ask for it or he gives it you without your asking, either by way of friendship, or by way of alms or relationship, or in any other way that you shall direct. But someone will say: "When the thing belongs to the house, I quite agree that it will be against the vow of poverty; but when it is given me by another, how can it be so? I take nothing from the house, nor put it to any loss; rather it seems I do it a good turn, saving it the cost of what otherwise it would have to give me. What sin is there there, and against what commandment?" I say that ordinarily it is a sin of theft, and against the Seventh Commandment of the law of God. And so St. Augustine says expressly in his rule: "If anyone wishes to give anything to a religious, if a father wishes to give his son some clothing or anything else, the religious cannot receive it without leave, but the superior is the person to receive it, and that not for the individual, but for the house and community, to give it to whomsoever he thinks stands most in need of it." If the superior thinks fit to give to another the clothing that was sent to you, he does you no wrong, since it is not yours. Coming into the house, it becomes common property; it is as much mine as yours. To come to the point, St. Augustine goes on to say: "And if anyone receives anything without leave, and keeps it covered up without giving an account of it to the superior, let him be condemned as guilty of theft." "For theft it is," says St. Basil, "to keep anything in private without leave of the superior." From whom is the thing stolen? Would you know from whom? St. Basil will tell you: "From your order and the community."

And let no one say that these are exaggerations of the saints, their usual way of talking, enhancing the matter in order to strike more terror and alarm into those whom they rebuke. It is not so; it is very plain truth and the common opinion of all the doctors, based on the principle, in which all agree, that a religious by his vow of poverty is incapacitated for holding anything as his own or giving anything away. As he is not his own, but belongs to his order, so all that they give him, when it comes under his hands, in whatsoever form it comes, at once becomes the property of his order. When a religious holds a chair or pension, such as we see are held at Salamanca and other universities, the revenues do not belong to the religious, but to his monastery; and the superior collects them, and the procurator in his name, as he does the other revenues of the monastery; and the religious who fills the chair has recourse to his superior for necessaries, just as he would if he did not hold the chair.

Hence it is very clear that it is theft for a religious to receive anything from another and retain it without leave of his superior; because the thing then belongs to the order when it comes into the hands of the religious; and so, if he keeps and retains it without leave, he usurps and steals from the order, acting contrary to the will of the superior. That is the definition of theft—to take or retain of another's goods contrary to the will of the owner. Hence it follows that, if a religious gives anything to another without leave, though it be by way of alms, the receiver acquires no dominion or ownership over it, but is obliged to restore it to the order. Hence it will be seen what a mistake it is to think that you can give to your relation or penitent or friend, a book, a picture, a reliquary, or anything of the sort, on the ground that it is not the house or order that gave it you, but another party. As it is a theft and an offense against the vow of poverty to take or give or dispose of anything of the house without leave of the superior, so also is it the like sin to take and receive anything from an outsider, and keep or dispose of it without leave of the superior.

But it must be observed that, though it were not a theft, and no wrong were done thereby to house or monastery or any other party, as might happen in some case, nevertheless it remains a mortal sin of its own kind to take or receive, use or dispose of any temporal thing without leave of the superior, because by the vow of poverty this is forbidden to the religious, and he is rendered incapable of such an act. And the recipient of such a thing from a religious would acquire no ownership of it, and would be bound to restore it, because he receives from one who cannot give, like one who receives from a minor.

In confirmation, there is a case related by Pope St. Gregory in his "Dialogues" (iv. 55). And the case was of this sort. In the monastery of St. Andrew, which St. Gregory built at Rome when he was pope, there was a monk called Justus. He asked a brother that he had in the world to buy him a woolen shirt. The brother put his hand into his purse and drew out three reals, and said to him: "There you see three reals; buy one to your taste." So Surius tells the story and says that he drew it from the original; but in the "Dialogues" of St. Gregory it is said to have been three ducats; but to our purpose it comes to the same thing whether they were reals or ducats, and at that time three reals were enough, and more than enough, to buy a woolen shirt. Anyhow, the monk took the three reals, or the three ducats, without leave, and kept them. He came to fall seriously ill. Another monk, happening to know that he was keeping those three reals and being uneasy in conscience about it, went to acquaint the abbot—according to the rule which we also have, that whoever knows anything serious about another must at once acquaint the superior therewith. The abbot thought the case so grave that the pope ought to be consulted about it; so he reported to St. Gregory, to see what was to be done. St. Gregory ordered that none of the monks were to visit the sick man, nor speak to him, but all should hold him for excommunicate, since he had broken his vow of poverty. He further ordered that when he died they were not to bury him with the other monks in consecrated ground, but outside the monastic enclosure, in a dunghill, and that they were to throw on his corpse the money that he was keeping, saying all aloud: *Thy money be with thee unto perdition* (Acts viii. 20). The monk died of that illness, and they did with him accordingly. St. Gregory says that this example struck such horror and alarm into the monastery that all the monks started rummaging their cells, and all the little things that they had, even with leave, and things that they might have kept lawfully, they took to their superior, to be sure of having nothing against poverty. By these and the like examples of the ancient Fathers, there was established this penalty by the sacred canons against religious who died proprietors.

CHAPTER XII

Coming Down to Particular Cases of Certain Things Contrary to the Vow of Poverty

IN the first place I say, and infer from what has been said, that, if the superior here in the house gives a religious money for his journey, he cannot out of that money buy rosaries or pictures or anything else, either for himself or to give to another, nor can he get his Agnus Dei or his reliquary mended, even though he subtracts from his food or saves what he might have otherwise spent. The reason is that the money is given him solely for his expenses on the way; and what he does not spend on that, however little it be, he must return to the superior who sent him or to the other superior of the place where he goes; and if he keeps it or spends it on anything else, he will be defrauding his order and sin against the vow of poverty. This is to be understood when the order gives the religious all that he needs for his journey, as is done in our Society. It would be another case if they gave him a determined and fixed sum, so much for each day, so that, though he needed more, they would not give it him; because then that would be a sign of an express or tacit or interpretative leave, enabling him to spend on other lawful things anything that he may save from what they give him.

Secondly, I say the same, though the journey-money is not given him by his order, but by parent, relation, or penitent. He cannot buy with it a breviary, or a spectacle case, or a pair of spectacles, or anything else, either for himself or to give away. Let no one deceive himself in this matter by saying: "This money was not given me by my order, but by my relation or friend;" for it does not matter whether your order has given it you, or your relation or friend, since in coming into your hands it is made over to your order, and is as though the superior or the procurator of the house had given it you. And so you cannot spend it except on that for which the superior gave it, that is, for your journey; and all that you have over, in whatsoever manner it be so, you must return to the superior; and if you spend it on anything else, or keep it, you sin against the vow of poverty, and are as though you had stolen it from your order. And this I say even in the case where one has received that money for his journey with leave of the superior; for if he had received it without leave, he would already have broken his vow of poverty by doing that.

Thirdly, it is the same when a man comes from a mission or from a visit to his relations, and there they have given him something, some article to ease him on his journey or some further article of clothing. When it comes into his hands, it becomes common property, and on reaching the house he must hand it over to the superior, or to the clothesroom in his name; and if he keeps it without leave, he will make himself a proprietor and commit a sin of theft against the vow of poverty.

Fourthly, though a religious be on his way to another house or college and has already his foot in the stirrup, he cannot ask or receive anything from any extern, not even for his journey-money, without leave of his present superior, though he understands that the other superior of the place to which he is going would be glad of it, as saving him the cost. The reason is because the one is at present his superior, and not the other, and so he would be receiving it without leave of his superior, having that superior present, as he is present, and being able to ask him. It would be another case if the traveler were away from the house and had no other superior of whom to ask leave; for in that case he might well receive what he understood to be according to the will of his superior, with the intention of declaring and giving an account of it as soon as he arrived at the house; for then he would be presuming the consent of his superior, a consent not to be presumed when there is an opportunity of having recourse at once to the superior or when the matter easily admits of delay.

Fifthly, it follows also from what has been said that, if the superior gives any religious leave to receive any money and keep it in the custody of the procurator for any definite purpose, as to get some writings copied, he cannot spend it on anything else without leave of the superior. Nor can he give a sixpence out of this money to any other religious of the house for any need that may occur, either his own, or that of some penitent or relation or friend, either by way of alms, for prizes of rosaries or pictures or anything else whatever, nor can the other receive it without leave; but both the one and the other in such a case would act against the vow of poverty, since it is against that vow to give or receive or dispose of anything temporal without the superior's leave.

Sixthly, as a religious cannot give or take without leave of the superior, so neither can he lend or receive a loan, for every sort of contract is forbidden him by the vow of poverty; although in little things and things of frequent occurrence he may presume himself to have a tacit or general leave to lend to another religious of the same house things that he has with leave, at least for a short time, more or less, as the use and practice of the order shall declare.

Seventhly, a religious will sin against the vow of poverty if, without the superior's leave, he receives a deposit from any person outside the house or within; for a deposit is a true contract and carries a liability of its own to the effect that the religious who charges himself with the deposit is bound to render an account of it and pay up if it be lost by any fault of his, legally investigated. There is also the embarrassment and anxiety that another man's money or other precious article carries with it, and the scandal there would be if money were found in the possession of a religious without leave and without its being known what it is. But in ordinary things which a religious has with leave and can keep in his room, the use and practice of the order declares that he may also give them to the custody of another of the house.

Eighthly, as it is against the vow of poverty to receive and keep in one's possession money or anything else that costs money, without leave of the superior, so also is it to keep money or anything that costs money, in the hands of another without the superior's leave; for it comes to the same thing to keep money in the hands of a friend or to keep it in one's own hands. Thus, if a man keeps in the hands of a penitent or friend any article for use for a journey, or any other thing whatsoever, that it may be given him when he goes out of his place of residence, it will be as much against the vow of poverty as if he kept it himself.

Ninthly, it is not in accordance with the poverty that we profess in the Society, rather it savors of ownership, to carry with one books or pictures or other like things, and take them with one when one changes residence. That, therefore, is not allowed in the Society; but all the things that one has are ordered to be inscribed and held for the property of the college or house where one resides, and there must stay when the man changes his residence, and he cannot take them with him. And if he takes them with him, it will be like stealing them from the house to which they were already applied, and so against the vow of poverty; and that although the donor had given them to this particular person and not to the order, for it comes to the same thing, as we have said above.

Tenthly, a religious will sin against the vow of poverty if he spends money on unlawful, vain, or superfluous things, even though the superior has given him leave for that, for it is forbidden by the vow of poverty, as the sacred canons declare. Not even the superior himself may spend money on such things, so neither may he give leave for it, but only on things necessary, useful, and becoming. Whence it follows that he who should receive such things as a religious had spent his money on ill, would be obliged to restore them to the order, according to what we said in the last chapter.

Eleventhly, it is contrary to the vow of poverty for a religious to keep anything hidden away, that the superior may not find it and take it from him; for, as the doctors observe, that is one way of seeking to appropriate a thing and keep it against the will of the superior.

Twelfthly, if you are a subordinate official to whom has been committed the distribution or disposal of certain things, you cannot do that at your own good pleasure and will, but must adapt yourself to the good pleasure and will of your superior. And to give more or less or worse than what you know to be the will of the superior will be against the vow of poverty, by using and dispensing things as if you were master and owner of them, instead of depending on another.

Thirteenthly, as he would sin against the vow of poverty who should of set purpose waste, or allow to go to waste, the things of the house that he has under his charge or that have been allowed him for his use, so also he will sin against the vow of poverty who wastes them or lets them go to waste by notable fault and carelessness. A gross fault, they say, is equivalent to malice. And the reason of this is, in the first place, that it is proper to him alone who is master of a thing to be able to consume and squander it at his whim; secondly, because the use of things given or entrusted to a religious is granted him solely for the benefit and profit of himself and of his order; and if he squanders and consumes or spends those things without profit, he will sin against the vow of poverty. And in these things it ought to be observed that, though the loss inflicted on the order each time is small, yet when it is repeated many times it may amount to grave matter.

There is a noteworthy example of this which Cassian relates, taken from the monks of old. One day the dispenser or procurator of the monastery went into the kitchen and saw on the floor three peas, which by chance had fallen from the hands of the cook when he was washing them to get them ready for cooking. He went and told the abbot, who called the cook and gave him a public penance for handling with negligence the goods of the monastery. These holy monks, says Cassian, regarded not only themselves, but all the things of the monastery, as things dedicated and consecrated to God, and so handled them with much care and reverence, no matter how small the thing was.

CHAPTER XIII

An Answer to an Objection Which Throws Much Light on This Matter

BUT someone will say: "There is an appearance of rigorism and excessive severity in this doctrine, since other religious also have their vow of poverty, and yet we see that they do not hesitate to receive from relation, penitent, or friend, money for a breviary and for a writing case, and even for a habit, and they are learned and God-fearing men. They are also wont to give to a friend in the house, or even outside, a book of those that they have, and even other things of greater value, without asking leave for it, and they have no scruple or suspicion that what they do may be against the vow of poverty. It follows that here in our own practice we should not sin against the vow of poverty either by doing the like, but at most against the perfection of it, and against the obedience due to the superior and to our constitution and rules." This is a very good objection, and therefore we have inserted it here, that by the solution all that has been said and has to be said may be made clear.

I say, then, that it is quite true that in some orders the religious do all these things without scruple, and without sin against the vow of poverty; but it cannot be inferred from thence that we should not sin either in doing the like. Rather, I say, that if we did those things, we should not only act against obedience and against our rules, but also we should sin against the vow of poverty. And the reason of the difference is that in other orders these things are now done with leave of superiors. There is either express leave for it or, at least, a tacit and interpretative, or virtual, leave, which is, as doctors say, when a usage is now commonly established in an order and superiors know and see it, and, having it in their power to gainsay and stop it, they do not gainsay and stop it, but connive at it and let it go on. He who is silent when he might speak and stop what is being done, is reckoned to consent. Silence, they say, gives consent. The religious, then, who has express or tacit leave from his superiors to give or receive or dispose of anything, does not sin against the vow of poverty by acting accordingly. And, therefore, in doing these things many religious do not sin; but the Society is beginning now, and desires to continue, in the strict keeping up of this wall of poverty, so far as by divine grace shall be possible. There is in it no leave for doing these things, neither express nor tacit nor interpretative leave. Rather there is an express usage and practice quite to the contrary, and therefore anyone who should do these things in the Society would sin against the vow of poverty. And other religious also would sin hereby against the vow of poverty if they had not leave for what they do. Nuns also are religious and have made a vow of poverty, and nevertheless they have their pensions out of which they clothe themselves and buy and do other things, and we set it down as lawful because they do it with leave of their superiors. It is clear that if any of Ours were to do that without lawful permission, he would sin against the vow of poverty. Hence it is not a good argument that the thing is done in other orders, though there are in them learned and holy men, as though that gave any ground for thinking that the same is lawful in our order; for in those orders there is leave, either express or tacit, to do so, and in ours there is not, but a usage and practice to the contrary. And thus these maxims that we have laid down are not scruples or pieces of rigorism, but truths well founded in all strictness in the common teaching of doctors.

St. Bonaventure and Gerson, spiritual and holy men and grave theologians, set down in so many words many of these particular cases that we have mentioned. They reduce all this business of a religious giving or receiving to the question whether he has or has not express or tacit leave from his superior to that effect. If he has it not, they say that he can neither give nor take nor receive anything, and would sin against his vow of poverty in doing so, because thereby he would cease to be a poor man and constitute himself an owner and proprietor by giving, taking, and disposing of a thing as he likes. Gerson puts the case of the procurator or steward of a monastery, who has money to buy things necessary for the community, and he asks whether he would sin against the vow of poverty by buying for himself or another a knife, a spectacle case, or a pair of spectacles, and he even comes down to minute things, as a needle, a quill pen, or a little thread. His answer is that there will be no sin if he does it with leave of his superior, particular or general, express or tacit; but if he does it otherwise, he sins against his vow of poverty; and he says the same of giving anything to an outsider or receiving anything from him. Thus all doctors agree that a religious is bound by his vow of poverty not to have or give or take or dispose of anything without leave of his superior. And if in any orders it is taken to be lawful for a religious to have small articles or dainties in his cell, and to be able to receive such from friends or relations, or give away and dispose of other such things, it is because in that order there is express or tacit permission thereto; otherwise it would not be lawful, but against the vow of poverty.

Hence follows a thing worth noting, that to be able to give an answer to a religious as to whether he sins and acts against his vow of poverty in this or that particular, it is necessary to know the practice of his order on that point. Otherwise it is impossible to give a sound opinion to the said religious; for many things may be lawful in one order, on account of there being a tacit and interpretative permission thereto, which would not be lawful in another order where there is no such permission.

Hence it follows that, though certain authors say that a religious would not sin against the vow of poverty by receiving money from another to buy books, or the like things, provided that he does not hide his purchases but keeps them open and plain to view, and is prepared in mind to exhibit and give them up if his superior so commands, yet a religious of our Society doing that would sin against his vow of poverty. The authors referred to speak in that way because they judge that there is there a tacit and interpretative permission, and that superiors give themselves out as satisfied with that sort of subjection and resignation. But in the Society there is no manner of tacit and interpretative permission to that effect, but a clearly declared rule to the contrary. The soutane, mantle, and breviary which we use with leave of the superior, we are obliged to hold in this way, with this subjection and dependence on the superior and with this preparedness of mind to give them up if he commands us; otherwise we should sin against the vow of poverty by being proprietors and keeping the article as our own. For receiving anything to buy a soutane or books or anything of the sort, though afterwards we exhibit the purchase plain to view in our room, and with the readiness aforesaid, there is no manner of permission in the Society, but a tradition and practice quite to the contrary, and so it would be against the vow of poverty. It is a dead certainty that, if the receiving and keeping of things in this manner, without any further permission, were taken to be lawful in the Society, we should all cry out against it in the congregations, and take care to have this side door shut, whereby our poverty might be ruined.

Doctors also make another observation on this matter of tacit and interpretative leave. They say that to enable a religious to give or ask or receive and keep anything, it is not enough that he knows for certain that, if he were to ask leave for it, the superior would grant it at once; as it is not enough to authorize you to go out of the house without leave, or write a letter, that you know for certain that if you did ask leave it would be given you. What is required is that you should know that the superior will be glad, and take it to be all right, for you to give or receive and keep the thing without his leave, and that he will not at all mind your not asking him. That is what is meant by a tacit and interpretative and virtual leave, enabling you to give or receive without asking further leave in particular; and that is what they have in some orders for many things of which we have spoken. But far from there being this acquiescence on the part of superiors in the Society, there is nothing that they desire more than that everything should be authorized under obedience; nothing that they would resent more than anyone's taking the liberty and having the boldness to do any of these things without leave. Thus in the Society we must use different language on this question of poverty, and on other particular questions, from what they use in some other orders. And the same held in other orders at their commencement, and some still keep it up very creditably.

CHAPTER XIV

That the Vow of Poverty Binds under Mortal Sin, and What Quantity Is Enough to Make a Mortal Sin

SOMEONE will ask whether these things which we have said to be against the vow of poverty will always be a mortal sin, or when they will be. We have already said that it is the common opinion of doctors and saints that he who sins against the vow of poverty commits a mortal sin of theft against the Seventh Commandment of the law of God. I say, then, that, as the Seventh Commandment binds under mortal sin *ex genere suo,* as theologians say, that is to say, of its own kind and nature, but by reason of the smallness of the matter the theft may be a venial sin, as the theft of an apple or of a halfpenny, so also the vow of poverty of its own kind binds under mortal sin; but in so light a matter one may break it without committing more than a venial sin. And if you go on to ask what will be considered a notable quantity, so as to amount to mortal sin, that is a question much debated among the doctors on the matter of theft, what quantity should be called "notable," to make the theft a mortal sin; and according to that standard, they say, will be the breach of the vow of poverty. Thus the quantity that will be enough for a mortal sin against the Seventh Commandment will also be "notable" and sufficient for a mortal sin against the vow of poverty.

For the greater elucidation and confirmation of this, some theologians observe that the gravity of this sin is determined by two elements. The first is the fact that the offender appropriates and takes to himself what is another's against the will of its owner; the second is that thereby he breaks a vow made to God. Looking only at the first element, they say a greater quantity seems necessary to make a mortal sin here than in theft, because the thing taken is not so entirely another's, nor the owner so entirely unwilling as in theft; but looking at the second element, that quantity will be enough for a mortal sin that would be enough for a mortal sin of theft, because the obligation created by the vow of poverty, not to appropriate or take anything against the will of the superior, is much greater than the obligation created by the Seventh Commandment, not to take anything against the will of the owner.

In the case we related above (Chapter XI) from St. Gregory, what that monk had taken, according to Surius' version of the matter (and he says that he drew it from the original) was only three reals [a real was worth about eight cents] and that from his brother, and that for a shirt which his order would have had to give him if the other had not supplied it. Nevertheless, St. Gregory judged that that quantity was enough at that time for a mortal sin, as is seen by the punishment and excommunication wherewith he punished for it. Of moderns who have written in our times [A.D. 1600] some reckon the amount of three reals [twenty-five cents] a notable quantity and sufficient for a mortal sin against the vow of poverty; others say four reals, others five. In the Carthusian Order a much smaller quantity is judged enough for a mortal sin, since they hold it sufficient for the deprival of ecclesiastical burial and for excommunication, as Navarro observes.

But granting that in the vow of poverty we may allow a little wider license, and that the value of three or four reals [twenty-four cents, or thirty-two cents] is a light matter, and that it would be necessary to go beyond that to amount to a mortal sin, as some would have it, should a religious, a man aiming at perfection, expose himself to these contingencies and risks: "Did what I received, gave, or kept, amount to the quantity sufficient for a mortal sin or not?" "Did it amount to four or to six reals [thirty-two cents, or forty cents]?" Buyers and boys who, when they go to market, appropriate sometimes a halfpenny, sometimes a farthing, are excused from mortal sin by the "parvity of the matter;" but what religious is there who, if sent to market, could bring himself to appropriate a halfpenny, on the plea that it does not amount to more than a venial sin? Now, if you could not bring yourself to do that, but would take it for a sacrilegious and very low trick, neither should you dare to give or receive anything without leave, alleging that it did not amount to a mortal sin, for such giving or receiving is at least equivalent to appropriation. Let us make account of small things, especially in so grave a matter as this, which touches one of the three essential vows of religion, since he who dares to be a defaulter in this, saying that it will not amount to a mortal sin, is in great danger of a mortal breach of the vow of poverty, since covetousness and the desire of having, of giving and receiving, is a strong passion, linked closely to our nature, which has a great liking for the same. So it blinds and deceives to a great extent; and often, though we cannot say for certain that the thing amounted to a mortal sin, we can say for certain that there was doubt of it; and a religious ought to be very far from putting himself in such doubts and risks.

CHAPTER XV

Whether a Religious Can Receive Money to Lay Out in Pious Works without Leave of the Superior, and When He Would Sin Therein against the Vow of Poverty

THE Society wishes us to keep such purity and perfection in this matter of poverty, and to be so far from the keeping and command of money, that we have a rule forbidding us to ask or receive anything from our penitents, either to give in alms to the poor, or by way of restitution, or for any other purpose. Thus, though a penitent be bound to restitution and would be glad to give his confessor the means of making it, the confessor cannot receive it nor charge himself therewith without leave of the superior. This rule is founded on high motives of prudence and experience, and the teaching and example of the saints. St. Basil expressly advises this, and Father Francis Xavier insisted on it much, as we read in his Life. And of the blessed St. Hilarion Abbot, St. Jerome relates in his history that, when he had cured a very wealthy man, casting out a legion of devils that he was possessed by, the patient offered him many gifts in gratitude; and as the saint refused to receive them, he importuned him to take them to give to the poor; but the saint answered: "You had better give them yourself, since you go about in towns and know the poor. I have left my own estate; why should I charge myself with yours?" It is our office to counsel these and the like works to our neighbor, but not to be other people's almoners, since that would be no help to our ministrations, but rather a hindrance. The only result would be that the whole house would be full of people seeking relief, and ten porters would not be enough for these applications alone, and the fathers would be taken off from confessions and spiritual ministrations to attend to this. Even the apostles found by experience that they could not attend to this without prejudice to spiritual ministrations of more importance. *It is not right for us to give up preaching the word of God to serve at tables* (Acts vi. 2), to attend to these temporal things. And so they had to choose out sundry persons to make this their occupation that they might be able to give their whole attention to the conversion of souls.

Some think that this distribution of alms is a good way of gaining our neighbor and attaching him to the frequentation of the sacraments. That is a mistake; you lose more than you gain thereby. There are many more complaining and discontented folk than folk who are satisfied with what you give them. Some complain because you give them nothing, others because they are not given more; they are all grumbling, and go on to tell stories how we are influenced by private partialities and acceptance of persons; they even think that we walk off with a bit for ourselves, and apply all we can to feathering our own nest. This is not a good way to entice our neighbor to confession; far from it. Many will thence take occasion to make sham confessions and tell a thousand lies to the confessor, to move and induce him to give them alms. Oh, how right is the Wise Man in advising us to believe the old and experienced, and follow their counsel (Ecclus. viii. 9)!

Occasionally, with leave of the superior, you may do well to receive some conscience money from a penitent, for example, when the affair is secret and your penitent cannot conveniently make the restitution himself without its coming to be known. Even then doctors advise the confessor, and it is very good advice, to ask of the person to whom he makes the restitution a note of hand, stating that he has received such a sum from him in a certain case of restitution that someone was charged with; and afterwards give this receipt to the penitent for his greater satisfaction and that of the confessor himself. And though the penitent says that he wants nothing of this, but has full reliance on his confessor, the confessor should not omit this precaution; the party will be glad when he sees the receipt, and will be edified, and more quiet and assured; nor will there come over him afterwards anxieties and suspicions as to whether that money was paid in the right quarter or not, as may readily happen when this precaution is not taken.

But now that we are treating of the vow of poverty, and what it binds us to in rigor, it will be well to declare when you will sin in this matter against the vow of poverty and when not, but only against obedience and against the rules. Theologians treat this question in detail, whether it would be a sin against the vow of poverty on the part of a religious, without leave of his superior, to receive money from an extern, not for himself, nor to distribute and mete out in his own name, but to do so in the name of the donor. The solution of this question turns on this, that there are two ways in which you may receive money from one person to give to another. The one is when the donor gives me the money that I, in his name, may give it to some specified person or distribute it on such and such pious works. That is the way in which money is given to confessors as conscience money for restitution, or to give in alms to certain poor people. To receive money in this way without leave of the superior, in the Society, would be against our rules, which forbid it, as we have said; but it does not appear that it would be a sin against the vow of poverty, because the donor in that case remains master of his money, and he it is that disposes of it; I am only his minister and instrument, to give it in his name to the person to whom he tells me.

But if the donor gives me the money to spend and distribute freely to any persons that I like, and as I like, then the receiving of it and giving and distributing of it, without the leave of the superior, would be not only against the rules, but against the vow of poverty. In the first place, because then the donor deprives himself of the dominion of the money and, so far as in him lies, transfers it to me that I may dispose of it as I like; and a religious is not capable of that. Secondly, because not only is it against the vow of poverty to become master and proprietor of a thing, but also to have the free use, administration, and dispensation of a thing without leave of and dependence on the superior; for this is a sort of ownership and private property, and is forbidden the religious by his vow of poverty. Nay, they say it is more against the vow of poverty to have the free use of property and possessions than to have the dominion and ownership thereof, because this having the use of property is more distracting and harmful to a religious than having the dominion and ownership without the use. The end for which the Church and the holy Fathers laid it down that religious cannot hold the dominion and ownership of property, was that so they might be free and disengaged from the use and administration thereof, and able to give themselves more entirely to God, because these cares are a greater hindrance and distraction than ownership. Thus, to save sin against the vow of poverty, it is not enough for a religious not to have the dominion and ownership of another's money, if he undertakes the free use and administration thereof without leave of the superior. Denis the Carthusian says well: Would it not be ridiculous for a father who had a son out of his mind, to be satisfied with depriving him of the ownership and dominion of a knife or a sword, while leaving him the free use of it? Quite as ridiculous is the conduct of those religious who accept the use of other people's money, thinking it enough that they have not the dominion and ownership; they take just that which is most distracting and harmful and prejudicial in the possession of property. There are some even who think that the former case is against the vow of poverty because it is taking and distributing money, or the equivalent thereto, without leave of the superior; though they say it will be a light matter, and not amounting to mortal sin, if the money is at once given to those whom the donor marks out.

Hence follows the solution of a case that is very practical, which is, whether a religious would sin against the vow of poverty who, without leave of his superior, should ask another for money or alms for a relation or friend or penitent of his, and receive and give it, or ask the donor to give or send it. I say that, if the religious who asks for or receives such a thing accepts it with the idea of making himself owner of it or to make use of it, he will sin against the vow of poverty, though he intends to give it or send it to his relation or friend and though, in fact, he does give it or send it afterwards, either by himself or by means or in the name of another. But if he does not accept it for himself, but, on the contrary, says clearly: "I have no need of it and cannot receive it for myself, but if you please to give it to So-and-So, or leave it with me to give or send it him in your name, you will be doing me a charity and a favor," in this case it will not be against the vow of poverty, although the donor does this out of regard to the religious, and the religious gives him thanks for having done so. The reason is that he does not receive it for himself nor make himself owner of it, but is the mere executor of the will of another, or intercessor, to get him to have this will and make this donation. Much less would it be against the vow of poverty to ask the donor to give or send the donation in his own name to such a person, although that person understands that the gift is due to the mediation and intercession of the religious.

But though this be not against the vow of poverty, it is clear that it is against the perfection of the vow, and expressly against our rules; and to proceed in these things without the leave and against the will of the superior is apt to involve many unseemly consequences. There is, besides, great danger in it of a breach of the vow of poverty. One cannot always be so wide-awake and so attentive to details as to make it clear: "Does the donor give it to me, or how do I receive it?" "Do I give it in my own name or in his?" "Does the donor give it, or do I make myself the owner and give it myself?" Especially so, since the covetous desire of having and commanding money, and distributing and disposing of things, is apt often to blind us, as we said in the last chapter, and under color of apparent reasons make us do things that are contrary to the vow of poverty; therefore we should be afraid and greatly shun these and the like ways of going on. Let it not be said of us what Cassian relates St. Basil to have said to a senator who had left the world and the dignity of senator and become a monk, that he might not have to earn his livelihood by the labor of his hands, as the other monks did. St. Basil said to him: "You have ruined the senator, and not made yourself a monk"—*Et senatorem perdidisti, et monachum non fecisti.* You are neither senator nor monk.

CHAPTER XVI

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

ST. JEROME relates that in the desert of Nitria one of the monks, who earned their livelihood by the labor of their hands, conceived a desire of getting together some money. He was a spinner of flax, and, covetousness lending energy to his labor, and he at the same time eating very little, he came to save a hundred *solidi,* or, as we might say, a hundred ducats. He died with them in his possession, and when they came to bury him they found the money. The monks assembled to see what should be done in such a case and what use to make of the money. St. Jerome says that there were dwelling there about five thousand monks in separate cells. Some said it should be distributed among the poor; others, that it should be given to the Church; others, that it should be sent to his parents, who were likely to be in some necessity. But the great Macarius, and Abbot Pambo, and Isidore, and others of those graver personages whom they called Fathers—the Holy Ghost speaking in them—said and determined that they should bury the money along with the corpse, saying: *Thy money be with thee unto thy perdition* (Acts viii. 20). And so it was done. St. Jerome goes on to say: "And let no one think that this was cruelty; it was not cruelty, but a sense of religion. This example struck such terror and consternation into all the monks throughout Egypt, that they counted it for a great offense that there should be found in their possession at the hour of death either a sovereign or a sixpence."

St. Augustine [*Pseudo-Augustinus, Sermones ad Fratres in Eremo,* Serm. 5, in S. Aug. Opera, tom. vi. p. 311, *inter spuria,* ed. Bened. The original, a different account, is in one of the saint's Letters] relates an example of a certain Januarius, a religious, held to be a saint, which I will quote in his own words, which show deep feeling and grief: "Tears and loud lamentations again and again and again should we put forth for the perdition of our Januarius, who was reckoned amongst us a pillar of obedience and poverty, and came to a miserable end. He came to us with tears in his eyes and promised to observe poverty as long as he lived, and yet he possessed in the world, without our knowing it, a vineyard and land. O deadly profession! O treacherous promise! His mouth uttered what his heart abhorred. We believed him a saint, while he was the worst of men. In this manner our Januarius lived for twelve years and more, a bad life, followed by a bad death. A bad life, because he kept secretly hidden away that which he had no right to call his own. A bad death, because not even at the end of his life did he renounce his deviation from the right way, but died obstinate in his sin; and without our knowledge he made a will, and left as his heir a son that he had in the world. Oh, would that, at least in the hour of death, he had told us this, that he might have obtained pardon by our prayers; but he neither confessed nor repented; therefore he is none of our company, nor ever was in his lifetime. Bind, then, the hands of his corpse and put in them, tied up in a cloth, the hundred and eleven shekels which he kept in a cupboard in his cell; and say with tears: *Thy money be to thee unto perdition* (Acts viii. 20). For it is not lawful for us, servants of God, to expend in the food, clothing, or labor of the monastery, what is the price of his eternal damnation."

Caesarius relates that among the Cistercians there was a religious who fell sick and made his confession to the abbot. They then brought him the Blessed Sacrament, and he opened his mouth to receive it, but he could not close his mouth to swallow the host; and to the surprise of all the priest took the particle from the sick man's mouth and gave it to another sick religious who was there, who received it with much devotion and swallowed it without any difficulty. Not long after, that other religious died, and the cause was discovered that hindered his salvation and benefit; for when they came to wash the body they found attached to it five *solidi,* not of silver, but of copper, and that was an unlawful thing to have. At sight of this all praised God; and when the abbot was informed of it, by his direction they buried him in unconsecrated ground, throwing his bit of money atop of him, and all saying together: "May thy money, that thou didst keep concealed contrary to thy profession, be with thee to thy eternal damnation." And the abbot, relating this occurrence in the next general chapter, added: "And that it may be understood that the reason why he could not swallow the most Holy Sacrament was not any hindrance arising from bodily infirmity, the same day he ate a whole chicken."

It is related in the chronicles of St. Francis that there was a brother in one of the convents of the order who knew how to read a little and, desirous to learn more, found means to get himself a psalter. But the rule forbidding lay brothers to learn to read, the guardian, knowing this, asked him for it. He answered that he had not got it. The guardian pressed him to say where it was, that he might not live proprietor of anything, but the lay brother would not obey. Not long after this he fell dangerously sick, and the guardian, for fear that he should die a proprietor, commanded him in virtue of holy obedience to give him the psalter or tell him where he had hidden it. But the unhappy man, hardened and obstinate in his denial, died without divesting himself of it. When on the night following the burial the sacristan rang for matins at midnight, he felt coming over him a great, heavy shadow, and heard at the same time a frightful inarticulate cry. He fell to the ground like a dead man. The friars, hearing the first peal of the bell for matins and seeing that it stopped, waited a considerable time and then came to look for the sacristan. They found him in a swoon, like one dead; when he came to himself, they learned from him the reason. They started matins, and this horrible shade appeared, making a hideous noise like a hoarse trumpet, without their being able to understand anything of what it said. The whole choir was upset, but the guardian encouraged them and said to the shade: "On the part of our Lord Jesus Christ and His sacred Passion, I call on thee to tell us who thou art, and what thou seekest in this place." It replied: "I am the lay brother whom you buried yesterday." The guardian said to it: "Dost thou want any of our suffrages and prayers, or why hast thou come hither?" It replied: "I want none of your prayers; they will avail me nothing, since I am damned forever on account of the psalter, in the ownership of which I died." The guardian then said: "I command thee in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that since we can do thee no good, thou go away at once and return no more to this place to trouble us." The shade at once disappeared and was never there seen or heard again.

Denis the Carthusian relates the following. A religious, finding his habit torn, went into the tailor's shop and took a piece of cloth to mend it without having asked leave. He fell sick soon after, and must have been a great servant of God, for there he lay dying in great joy and contentment, with no remorse of conscience, nor could the devil find anything wherewith to disturb him. Being thus disposed, he chanced to look towards the corner of his cell where his habit hung, and saw the devil in the shape of a monkey, sitting upon it, and licking with satisfaction the piece of cloth wherewith he had mended it. Then he came to take account of the fault he had committed in taking the piece of cloth without leave; whereupon he sent to call the superior, told his fault and was reconciled, and the devil immediately vanished.

In the history of the Order of St. Dominic it is related that, when the holy Friar Reginald was Prior of Bologna, a religious had received for alms a piece of cloth of the sort they used, to mend his habit with, but he had received it without leave. The holy man called him to chapter, reproached him in severe language as a thief and proprietor, gave him a good discipline besides, and burned on the spot the piece of cloth in sight of the other religious.

In the same history it is related that, when Albertus Magnus was provincial in that holy order, he gave strict command that no friar should have in his possession or in the possession of a third person, any money to any amount whatsoever, whether his own or another's, or for himself or for another, and that under the severest penalties. And it coming to be proved in a general chapter against a certain friar that he had violated this ordinance and statute, he punished him severely, even to the length of disinterring him from his grave, for he had been dead for some time, and casting him out from consecrated ground onto the dunghill, in imitation of those saints of old who were wont thus to treat brethren who died proprietors.

TWENTIETH TREATISE

OF THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

CHAPTER I

Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Chastity, and the Degrees Whereby We Are to Mount to the Perfection Thereof

THIS is the will of God, your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication, and know every one of you how to possess the vessel of his body in sanctification and honor; for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to sanctification (I Thess. iv. 3-4, 7)—not to carnal delights, but to serve Him in purity and entirety of body and soul. By the name of sanctity, or sanctification, the Apostle here means chastity, as St. Bernard observes. Christ our Redeemer in the holy Gospel calls it a heavenly and angelic virtue, making us like to the angels. *In the resurrection,* in that happy and blessed life, *there shall be no marrying nor giving in marriage, but they shall be as angels of God in heaven* (Matt. xxii. 30). So St. Cyprian, addressing certain virgins, says: "You are beginning to enjoy in this life what you are to have in the glory of heaven; you are like the angels so long as you persevere in chastity and purity." Cassian confirms this, and says that by no other virtue do men become so like the angels so much as by chastity; for by that they live in the flesh as though they had no flesh, but were pure spirits, as St. Paul says: *Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit* (Rom. viii. 9). And in some way we surpass the angels in this respect, because for them, having no bodies, it is not much to observe this purity, but for man, living in the mortal flesh, which so violently wars upon and contradicts the spirit, it is a much greater thing to live as though he had no flesh, but were a pure spirit. So pleasing to God is this virtue that, when the Son of God became man and had to be born of a woman, He chose to be born of a virgin mother, and one consecrated by a vow of chastity, as the saints observe.

St. John in the Apocalypse (xiv. 1-5) says that he saw on Mount Sion (that is, in heaven) in company with the Lamb (that is, Christ) those who kept their virginity, and that they followed him wherever He went and sang a new song which none could sing but the virgins. St. Gregory here observes that the virgins are with Christ on the Mount because by the great merit of chastity they are raised high in glory.

St. Jerome and St. Augustine, speaking of that prerogative of St. John the Evangelist to be more loved by Christ than the rest of the apostles (since the holy Gospel names him *the disciple whom Jesus loved,* John xxi. 7), say that the reason of this special love was his being a virgin. And so the Church sings in the office of his feast: "The reason of Jesus' loving him was because by his special prerogative of chastity he had made himself worthy of this signal love, since, chosen by Him a virgin, a virgin he remained for all time." And so some explain that text of Proverbs (xxii. 11): *He that loveth cleanness of heart shall have the king for his friend.* Therefore did the Lord cherish and favor him so much; therefore did He make him recline on His breast; and what Peter, a married man, did not dare to ask Christ at the Supper, St. John asked him. And on the day of the Resurrection, when St. Mary Magdalen told them that Christ had already risen, he and St. Peter ran to the monument, but he arrived first. And another time when they were in their ship fishing in the Sea of Tiberias, the Lord appeared to them on the shore, and when the others did not recognize Him, he alone who was a virgin (St. Jerome says), with those eagle eyes of his recognized the Virgin and Son of a Virgin and said to St. Peter, *It is the Lord* (John xxi. 7). Finally, when Christ was on the Cross, in that His last will, to whom did He commend His Virgin Mother but to His virgin disciple (John xix. 27)?

But I will leave aside the praises and excellences of chastity, and many other things that we might say of it, because

I intend to be very brief on this matter, imitating therein our Father Ignatius.

Cassian lays down seven degrees of chastity, as so many steps whereby we may mount to the perfection and purity of this heavenly and angelic virtue. The first is for a man in his waking hours never to be overcome or carried away by any unclean and sensual thought or motion. The second is not to dwell on the like thoughts, but as soon as they come, cast them off. The third is not to be moved or thrown off one's balance, little or much, by the sight of any woman. This is a degree of great perfection, and not so common as the first, owing to the great weakness and corruption of our flesh, which readily rises in rebellion on such occasions. The fourth is not to allow the devil in any way to beard you while you are awake, and also, while you are awake, not to suffer in yourself so much as a simple movement of the flesh. The fifth is, when it is necessary to deal with matters of this nature, either studying them or lecturing on them, to pass them by in perfect tranquillity and to be no more moved by the memory of such things than by a treatise on bricks, agriculture, or building. Of this degree our blessed Father Ignatius was perfect master from the date of his conversion, as we read in his Life. The sixth degree is even in sleep to have no illusions or representations or phantasms of anything impure. This argues great purity and is a sign that no impression of the sort remains in the memory; while the contrary, though it is no sin on account of the person's being asleep, shows that the sensual appetite is not wholly overcome and brought into subjection, nor the memory of such things effaced. The seventh and last degree, says Cassian, which is granted to few—as to a certain Abbot Serenus, and others like him, whom the Lord has thus favored—is when one has arrived at such purity that neither waking nor sleeping does one feel in oneself any of those movements which are wont to happen from natural causes. Thus by force of grace the appetite is reduced to quiet and peaceful subjection, and that frail and weak element of human nature comes to enjoy now the felicity and privileges which it had in the first state of innocence, *the body of sin being destroyed,* as St. Paul says (Rom. vi. 6); and sin in such persons by the grace of the Lord loses the force and masterfulness which it formerly had; they feel no disorderly movement nor anything redolent thereof, but live in the flesh as though they had no flesh.

But we do not hereby mean to say that it is contrary to the perfection of chastity to experience sundry of these motions, waking or sleeping, because it is a natural thing, and Cassian there acknowledges that even in perfect men such things may occur. To some of His servants the Lord is pleased to do them the favor of granting them this perfection of chastity; others by the grace of the Lord scarcely feel anything of these disturbances; others, when anything of that sort offers, recover their peace and quiet as easily as if nothing had happened. All this is that imitation of angelic purity which our Father sets before us in his Constitutions as a thing to aim at—*enitendo angelicam puritatem imitari.* And let this word *enitendo* (striving) be noticed, because the word *strive* means not only to labor at getting, but to labor hard, doing violence to oneself, as is done under difficult circumstances to overcome that difficulty. He wishes to teach and advise us on this point, that to arrive at angelic purity it is necessary to put forth our whole strength into the work and take up the affair a long way back, exercising ourselves in all the virtues and particularly in mortification. For though this is a gift of God, and no human industry is sufficient to attain it, nevertheless the Lord wishes that we should do our part, and He wishes to give us the gift only on that condition.

CHAPTER II

That to Preserve Chastity, Mortification of All the Senses, and Especially of the Eyes, Is Necessary

CASSIAN says that it was the decided opinion of the ancient Fathers, borne out by many experiences, that it was impossible to restrain or overcome this vicious craving of the flesh otherwise than by accustoming oneself to mortify and crush one's own will in all things. St. Basil and other saints argue at great length that to gain and preserve the purity and perfection of chastity, the practice of all the virtues is necessary, since they all serve and help to the guardianship of this virtue, as has been shown already in the course of this work. We will here only mention some particular points, the first of which is the need of custody of the senses, particularly the eyes, the gates whereby evil enters into the heart. On the text: *Who are those who fly as clouds, and as doves gather at their windows?* (Isaias lx. 8), St. Gregory says that the just are said to *fly as clouds* because they rise above the things of earth, and they are said as doves to gather at their windows, or peep-holes, because, taking care not to go out to look through the windows of their senses at exterior things that pass outside, they are preserved from coveting them. But they who lightly go out to look through these windows at the things of the world, are often carried away by desire of them. The Prophet David, holy man as he was and accustomed to soar like a cloud to the consideration of high and divine mysteries, was carried away by what he saw, because he was not cautious in looking (II Kings xi. 3). *Death hath entered by our windows* (Jerem. ix. 21). The death of sin entered by the windows of his eyes and robbed and despoiled his soul and killed it. *Mine eye hath despoiled my soul* (Lam. iii. 51). St. Gregory says: "It is not proper to look at what it is not lawful to desire"—

Intueri non decet quod non licet concupiscere. Things will carry you away if you look at them. They will snatch and steal away your heart; and when you least expect it, you will find yourself a prisoner and a captive.

Holy Job secured himself beforehand well against this. *I made a bargain with mine eyes not even to think of a maiden* (Job xxxi. 1). What manner of bargain is this, says St. Gregory, to bargain with the eyes not to think? It is with the understanding and the imagination, it would seem, that we ought to bargain not to think; with the eyes, not to look. No, he says, it is with the eyes he bargained not to think of a woman, because holy Job knew right well that it is by that entrance that evil thoughts come into the heart; and custody of the eyes and gates of the senses is the right way to keep custody of the heart and understanding. Therefore he says that he made a bargain with his eyes not to think of a woman. So, if you wish not to have impure thoughts, you must keep your eyes chaste and pure, and make a bargain with your eyes not to look at what you cannot lawfully desire. St. Chrysostom reflects on these words: "Who will not wonder, seeing this great man, who braved the devil and wrestled face to face with him and overcame all his machinations and ambushes, not having the courage to confront a girl!" It was, he says, that we may understand how necessary caution is for us in these matters, however religious we may be.

The holy Abbot Ephrem says that three things are great helps to virtue, to chastity particularly—temperance, silence, and custody of the eyes. And though you keep the first two, yet if you do not guard your eyes, your chastity cannot be depended on; because as, when aqueducts are broken, the water is spilled and lost, so is chastity lost when looks and glances are scattered and thrown about here and there. Another saint says that the sight of a woman is like a poisoned arrow that goes straight to the heart, or like a spark falling on straw, which, if it remains there and is not put out at once, kindles a great conflagration; so is a bad thought originating in a sight.

Of St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, Surius relates that he was so extremely cautious in this matter of looking at women that, though he was bishop more than fifty years, and confessor to many women, and had a great deal of business to transact with ladies of high rank whom the fame of his sanctity attracted not from his own diocese alone, but from all quarters, yet he never knew any woman by sight, since he never looked them in the face so as to know them, except one ugly old crone that was a servant in his house. And he used to say that it was necessary to proceed with this caution because it is impossible for anyone to guard his heart from evil thoughts who does not set a guard on his eyes. We read of St. Bernard that on one occasion he was a little off his guard in looking at a woman, without adverting to what he was doing, and when he took account of it, he was so indignant and ashamed of himself that, though it was winter, he plunged into a pool of icy water hard by, up to the throat, and remained there till they drew him out half dead.

CHAPTER III

That, Particularly in This Virtue of Chastity, It Is Necessary to Make Much Account of Small Things

THE higher and more precious this virtue of chastity is, the greater care and diligence is necessary to preserve it. Everywhere it is of much importance to take account of small and minute things, because, as the Wise Man says: *He that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little* (Ecclus. xix. 1). But especially is it necessary in this virtue, because any stain, however small, is a great disfigurement to chastity. In things precious and beautiful, as we see, any flaw disfigures them, and that the more, the more excellent and beautiful they are. So it is with this most high and fair virtue of chastity; we may even say that there is no virtue more tender or more delicate. Brother Giles, one of the first companions of St. Francis, likens chastity to a brilliant mirror, that at the slightest breath or puff is covered with a spot and loses its luster and brightness; so does chastity lose its splendor and beauty for very little things. Therefore we must go our way with great caution, mortifying the senses and cutting short and stopping at once any evil thought, and shunning occasions; for an evil thought, like a flame, leaves a trace of itself wheresoever it touches, more or less according as it is dwelt upon; and if it does not burn, at least it leaves a smut. Thus these things, if they do not go so far as to set fire, are enough to tarnish, because they awaken in the soul imaginations and thoughts contrary to chastity, and impure and disorderly motions in the body.

With great reason did our Father say that the matter of chastity needs no comment. No man can trust himself; no man can say to himself: "Up to this point I shall not catch fire; going ever so little further, I should; it is lawful thus far, but a step or two beyond, it would be unlawful." You cannot use such language as this in the matter of chastity: "I will go so far, but not a step further;" for when you think it least, you will go where you never thought to go. He who casts himself down a slippery descent thinks only to go as far as the particular spot which he has marked; but the weight of his body and the smoothness of the rock makes him go further, though he had no such intention when he started. So it is here; this is very slippery ground, and the weight or inclination of our flesh downwards is very great. The delicate nature of this virtue does not allow of our going so near to losing it and putting ourselves in these dangers. It is a most precious treasure, and we have it stowed in an earthen vessel so frail that in a trice there comes a crash, and we have nothing of it left.

Thus it is necessary to go our way with much solicitude and diligence, stopping in every way the approaches to any disorderly motion whereby this passion might gain the mastery of our heart.

We read of one of the ancient Fathers that he had a great gift of chastity and, nevertheless, went about with great care and caution even on slight occasions, casting out any evil thought at once as soon as it started, and being extremely careful in his looks, his conversation, and his intercourse with others. His companions said to him: "Father, why are you so apprehensive, seeing that the Lord has fortified you with the gift of chastity?" The holy man answered: "Look you, if I do what I ought and what is possible on my part in these little minute points, the Lord will help me never to come to a fall in greater things; but if I am negligent and begin to be careless in these trifles, I do not know that He will help me; anyhow, I should deserve that the Lord should cast me off from His hand, and so I should come to fall. And therefore I make it a point to neglect nothing, but ever do what is in my power in all things, though they seem petty and trifling." Surius relates of St. Thomas Aquinas that, though he had received supernaturally from God the gift of chastity, so as to feel no temptations against it, and angels had told him that he should never lose the chastity which he had received, nevertheless he took extreme care to withdraw his eyes from looking at women, and on every other occasion that could do him harm. Thus, then, we should behave if we wish to preserve in ourselves the purity and perfection of this virtue, otherwise we may have reason to fear a fall. This is what holy Job meant by saying: *I made a covenant with my eyes not to look at a woman* (xxxi. 1), to escape any evil thought that might thence have come to me. And he went on to say: *For if I did not do that, what part would God have in me?* As though he would say: "If there were not in me this care to stand on my guard and shun occasions, and cast off any evil thought, and make account of small things, there might come upon me some evil desire whereby I should lose God." The devil in this business acts like a master burglar, who, having a mind to rob a house and finding it locked up, observes some small aperture or little window by which he cannot get in himself, but thrusts in some little thief of a boy, that he may go in and open the door for him to do his job. So the devil sends evil thoughts, a slight glance, and other little things of the sort, like small thieves to open the door for him to come in. Therefore it is of great importance to go our ways very cautiously, shunning occasions of sin and anticipating them from afar; and any care that we may take on this point will be well spent.

Cassian brings in here the saying of the Apostle: *Every wrestler abstaineth from all that can hinder his wrestling* (I Cor. ix. 25), and says: "Those athletes who performed and ran in the Olympic games, not to weaken or diminish the strength they required for them, abstained from foods that could hurt them; they shunned idleness and gave themselves up to exercises that were likely to increase their strength. And not only that, but to be nimbler and stronger they put on their reins plates of lead, so that they might have no motion or illusion even in sleep, nor anything befall them to the detriment of their strength and vigor. This they did to gain a prize and a perishable and corruptible crown; what ought we to do in all reason to gain this angelical and heavenly virtue, and an eternal crown that will remain for ever and ever! *And they indeed to gain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible* (I Cor. ix. 25)."

CHAPTER IV

That in Confession We Should Take Particular Account of Anything Contrary to Chastity

ST. BONAVENTURE, speaking of confession, lays down a general instruction very important for all. He says that all should be much on their guard not to fail to confess sundry little things that often happen and cause shame, on the plea: "Oh, that's no sin, at least it is not a mortal sin, and we are not bound to confess venial sins." Hereby great evils often gain entrance, which to many have been the beginning of their perdition. God deliver us from thus giving entry to the devil and opening to him this side door, for he needs nothing more than this to effect his purpose. Presently, shame making common cause with the vileness of the thing in question, he will get you to believe that that was not a sin which was, or, at least, that it is doubtful whether it was, and that you may omit to confess it. In people who have been good and not in the habit of having mortal sins on their conscience, this shame is wont more especially to prevail when anything happens to them; because, as pride and craving for esteem is so connatural to us and so deep-rooted in our constitution, it then starts up and makes us greatly afraid of falling from our reputation and losing the good opinion which our confessor had of us. So it sets the man to work looking for reasons to persuade himself that this disgraceful act, which he now finds himself so ashamed to mention, did not amount to mortal sin, and so he is not obliged to confess it.

At other times, though he does not altogether conceal it, shame makes him so mince matters, and speak in such roundabout terms, that the confessor cannot tell what he would be at, or at least takes it not to be so grave a matter as it is; and the penitent might just as well have held his tongue as say what he did say. A confession ought to be so clear that the confessor shall understand the gravity of the sin. If the penitent confesses a thing in such a way that it does not appear to be a sin, or in such a way that the gravity and necessary circumstances are not declared, it is as though he had entirely failed to confess it. Shame, or rather pride, blinds and deceives people so that they do not declare it all. Little or no sorrow has that man got for his faults who has not virtue enough to tell and declare them to his confessor. You should offer this shame and confusion in compensation and satisfaction for the fault that you have committed, thereby to appease God our Lord. The very feeling of shame and difficulty in telling the fault ought to be enough to rouse your suspicions and make you think it worth while to tell it, though there were no more in the matter than the overcoming of this shame, and the mortifying of yourself and not letting the devil and the flesh have the best of the transaction.

This especially, because in this matter of chastity there are many things which those who know no better think are not mortal sins, and which really are so. There are other things about which it is not easy to determine whether they amount to mortal sins or not, because they are very doubtful; and these also you are bound to confess under pain of mortal sin, saying that you were in doubt whether such a thing that you did was a mortal sin or not, or that you doubt whether you consented or took delight voluntarily and with advertence in the thing or not. Thus it is enough for one to be in doubt whether his fault amounted to mortal sin or not, to be bound to confess it under pain of mortal sin; and if he does not confess it, his confession will be sacrilegious, and his Communion also.

Very often the confessor himself, for all his learning, cannot settle whether the thing amounts to a mortal sin or not; and how dare the penitent be judge in his own cause, and defy the court, and make up his mind that it did not come to so much, and so fail to confess it? Such a one puts himself in great danger, especially when it appears that he is inclined to leave the thing alone and would like, if he could, to blot it out, and that it should not appear to count for so much, for the shame that he has in saying it. I would not take it upon myself to reassure him. There needs no better witness than the individual's own conscience. He who accuses himself in confession of smaller things, cannot help feeling remorse, seeing that he is omitting a thing that he knows to have more in it than all the rest. At the hour of death you would not dare to fail to declare it. Just as little should you dare to leave it out now, seeing that we should confess every time we go to confession all our doings just as if we were going to die there and then. St. Gregory says: "It is a mark of good souls to fear fault even where there is none." So, too, it is a mark of souls that are not good not to fear fault where there is ground for fearing it.

Some people say: "I leave it out, not to make myself scrupulous." This is another usual deceit of the devil. It is not making yourself scrupulous, since those who are aiming at virtue confess, and should confess, less things than that, not of necessity, not out of scruple, but for devotion and reverence for the Most Holy Sacrament. Such is the purity with which we ought to approach it that, even where there is no fault, it is the counsel of spiritual men that we should accuse ourselves in this fashion: "Father, I accuse myself of having had impure temptations." And if you think that you have been negligent in resisting them, you should say: "I think there has been some negligence in letting them in and not casting them off, but nothing more than light and venial negligence." It is very common for there to be some fault and negligence therein, because these temptations take a great hold of one. But even though you think there has been no fault on your part, you may say: "I accuse myself of having had many thoughts and temptations against purity, though I think that by the mercy of the Lord I did what I could on my part, and there was no fault in them." That is how we are advised to confess also evil thoughts that arise against God and His saints and against faith.

Even of less things than this we are advised to accuse ourselves in this matter; as of what happens in sleep, although there is no fault there, because where there is no liberty there is no fault. Nevertheless, you are well advised to accuse and humble yourself over this illusion, though you need not when you have given no cause for it and there has been no fault of yours therein. So they who fear God make a point of seeking reconciliation on this matter before Communion, out of reverence for so sublime a sacrament. Theologians examine whether we should omit Communion on that account, and they say it would be more reverent to put it off to another day, unless there is some special reason to the contrary, as when it is a general Communion day for the community, and one would be noted if one did not communicate; but where Communion is optional, it is good to follow the advice given.

CHAPTER V

How Violent and Dangerous Is the Passion of Love, and How Much We Ought to Fear It

ONE of the things most to be feared is the passion of love. Love is the chiefest and strongest of the passions, and the passion most difficult to withstand; all the greater the risk we run of being carried away and thrown headlong by it. The blessed St. Augustine well sets forth the force and violence of this passion and the reason we have to fear it, by two grave examples from Holy Writ. The first is that of our father Adam. The saint asks: What was the reason why Adam obeyed the voice of his wife and broke the commandment of God by eating of the forbidden tree? Can it be that Adam was deceived and led to believe that, if he ate that fruit, he should be like God, as the serpent had told Eve? It is not to be supposed that Adam, gifted with such profound wisdom as he was, could have been deceived to the extent of believing such a thing. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *Adam was not deceived like Eve* (I Tim. ii. 14) to believe such a thing as that. So St. Augustine observes that when God asked Eve: *Why hast thou done this?* she answered: *The serpent deceived me and I ate.* But when He asked Adam, he did not answer: "The woman that Thou gavest me deceived me, and I ate," but answered: *The woman that thou gavest me for companion gave me that fruit, and I ate* (Gen. iii. 12-13). He had conceived such love and such affection for his wife that, not to vex her, he did what she asked. This is the way that Adam was deceived; it was love that deceived him—not that he was overcome by sensuality and concupiscence of the flesh, says St. Augustine, for at that time there was not that rebellion in it; but he was carried away by love and good will of friendship, by which, sometimes, to please a friend we displease God. Thus it was by love that sin entered into the world, and with it death and all evils and afflictions.

The second example is that of Solomon. What, says St. Augustine, made Solomon fall into such folly as to turn idolater? It is not to be supposed, says St. Augustine, that a man to whom God had given such wisdom could have believed that there was any divinity in idols, or any profit in honoring them. What, then, brought him to commit such a signal folly as to adore them and offer them incense? Do you know what? Love. Holy Writ itself tells us this clearly. *He loved with a most passionate love idolatrous women, those women concerning whom God had given command to the children of Israel to have nothing to do with them, since without doubt they would pervert them and bring them to worship their gods* (III Kings xi. 1-2). Solomon did not obey this commandment of God and so that befell him which God said; for taking one woman of them to wife he built a temple to the idol which she adored; and taking another he built another to her idols too, and so to all the rest. They adored there their idols, and King Solomon, with all his gravity and wisdom, adored them also along with them, and offered them incense, not because he believed that there was anything there to worship, says St. Augustine, but because he was overcome and blinded by love, and was loth to displease the objects of his affections, and wished to give pleasure and satisfaction to those whom he loved so much. Love perverted his heart.

Therefore saints and masters of spiritual life warn us to be much on our guard against this passion and against all occasions that may carry us thereto. Even though the love seem good and be for persons of high virtue and holiness; even though the talk and conversation be on good and spiritual subjects, and the parties to it fancy that such conversation is a great help to them to advance in spirit; nevertheless let them proceed with much care and reserve. This is the common teaching of the saints, and St. Bonaventure applies it, saying that spiritual love is apt to degenerate and be adulterated, and from spiritual turn to that which is carnal and sensual. And though at the beginning it were wine, it afterwards gets mixed with water; and what was balsam is adulterated by admixture of other liquors, base and vile, according to that text of Isaias (i. 22) : *Thy wine is mingled with water.* This is the means and bait which the devil is wont to employ to deceive a man and carry him off little by little to where he wants him to go.

St. Bonaventure says very well that the devil does what the master of the feast does. In the beginning he puts out good wine, and then that which is worse (John ii. 10). In the beginning he makes them believe that all is devotion and spirituality, and that they shall derive great profit from this intimacy and familiarity; and when he sees them now grown soft and overcome, and thinks that they are pledged to one another, then he openly brings out his poison; this was the bait set to start with to gather them into the fish trap. And the devil is not wearied, says St. Bonaventure, with spending a long time playing his catch with this bait, which seems so good; he counts it all well spent in return for gaining the object of his desire, that this spiritual love may come to end in carnal and sensual love. Oh, how many, says St. Bonaventure, have started conversations and intimacy with certain other persons under color of some spiritual motive, thinking that their whole dealing was of God and spiritual things, things of profit to their souls; and so possibly it was at first, but little by little this love fell away and degenerated, and their conversation came to turn on topics irrelevant, light, and ridiculous! *They began in the spirit, and ended in the flesh* (Gal. iii. 3).

Gerson tells of a servant of God highly endowed as well in learning as in virtue, who used to hold conversations with a nun, a servant of God, on holy subjects profitable to the soul. But little by little, along with this conversation and interchange of ideas, love grew, *sed non in Domino*—"not in the Lord." The attachment was so strong that he could not refrain from going to visit her many times, and prolonging the interviews; and when he was not in her company, he could scarcely give over thinking of her. Nevertheless, so blind was the good man that he did not think there was any danger in all this, or any deceit of the devil, for he said to himself that nothing evil ever came into his thoughts about her—an excuse wherewith many are apt to be blinded and deceived. So the thing went on until he was forced, on a certain occasion that arose, to take a long journey. Then, on going away, the servant of God felt that this love was not pure or chaste, and but for God's removing the occasion by this absence he was very near falling into great mischief. And so, says Gerson, there speaking of the great danger and deceitfulness that there is in love, all is not gold that glitters, nor is everything charity that appears so. And he quotes the saying of a person of high sanctity, that there is nothing to be more dreaded and held in greater suspicion than love, though it be with persons of great virtue and holiness; and he alleges hereupon the witness of the Wise Man: *There is a way that seemeth to a man right, and the last portions of it lead to death* (Prov. xvi. 25). Such seeming right ways are very crooked and are bound to end in evil. Such, he says, is apt to be this way of love.

CHAPTER VI

Of Some Remedies against Impure Temptations

SOME such remedies we mentioned in the treatise On Temptations; others we put off to this place, and shall treat of them now. To begin with, prayer is one of the chief remedies that Holy Writ and the saints prescribe for all temptations, and Christ Himself teaches us in the Gospel: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). Bede says that, as the thief runs when he hears cries, and all the world is getting up and coming to the rescue, so the cry of prayer makes the devil fly, and rouses the angels and blessed saints to come to our succor and aid. We read of St. Bernard that, when they came to rob him of his chastity, he cried out, "Robbers, robbers!" and therewith the robber fled. Now, if crying out and calling upon men puts a robber to flight, how much more will that robber, as cunning as he is old, who seeks to rob us of the spiritual riches of our soul, take to flight upon the cries for help that we put forth to God and His saints!

It is a special and singularly effectual remedy for this purpose to betake ourselves to the consideration of the Passion of Christ and hide ourselves in His wounds. "There is no remedy more powerful and efficacious against impure temptations," says St. Augustine, "than to think of the Passion and death of Christ our Redeemer. Nowhere have I found such an efficacious remedy as to take refuge in the wounds of Christ; there I sleep securely and there I come to life again." A grave doctor notes and reflects very happily that the evangelist did not say that the side of Christ was wounded, but that it was *opened,* that we might understand that here was the way opened to penetrate to the heart of Christ, and that there must be our refuge and place of safety, in those *holes of the rock* (Cant. ii. 14), *which is Christ* (I Cor. x. 4). St. Bernard also assigns this remedy and says: "When you feel this temptation, gather yourself together at once to think of the Passion of Christ and say: My God and my Lord is nailed to a cross, and am I to give myself over to pleasures and amusements?" This is like what that faithful servant answered when the king bade him go and take his ease and enjoy himself at home: *The ark of God and my lord and captain Joab are in the field and under canvas, and am I to go and eat and take my pleasure in my own house? Please God, never will I do such a thing* (II Kings xi. 11). That is what we should say: "Thou, O Lord, art on the Cross in expiation of the pleasure that men take in sinning; I have no mind to take pleasure at such cost to Thee."

Some help themselves in these temptations by the memory and consideration of the last things, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Ecclus. vii. 40). Some profit by the consideration of hell, reflecting on that saying of St. Gregory: "A pleasure lasting for a moment followed by an eternity of torment." To go deep into the study of this eternity, in which the wicked shall be for ever and ever, so long as God is God, is a very efficacious means to keep off sin, according to that saying of the prophet: *They shall go down alive into hell* (Psalm liv. 16). To go down alive into hell in thought and reflection is a great safeguard against going there after death. Others help themselves by the consideration of heaven, thinking what a folly it is, as indeed it is, to give up God in exchange for a passing pleasure, and so lose everlasting glory. And what greater folly could there be than to give over doing what God commands us, while He invites us to heavenly glory for doing it, and go and do what the devil wants, inviting us to hell for the doing of the same? Others find great profit in the remembrance of death and the last judgment. All these are excellent considerations; let each one have recourse to that from which he finds he derives the greatest benefit. Sometimes he will find it in one, sometimes in another; and so we are to get help from all. It will also be a great help in these temptations to make the sign of the cross on your forehead and your heart and call with devotion on the holy name of Jesus. Wonderful effects have been seen to follow from this, and many miracles, which we have in the histories.

Devotion to Our Lady is a help everywhere; so there should be no one who does not practise it or fail to have recourse at once to this sovereign Virgin with great confidence. She cannot cease to be merciful who bore for nine months, enclosed in her womb, Him Who is mercy itself. She is the Mother of Mercy and Advocate of Sinners, whom she loves because she sees how much her Son loves them and at what a price He has bought them. Above all, she sees that sinners were the occasion of the Eternal Word's taking flesh of her flesh, and of her becoming Mother of God. For this reason she looks upon them with compassionate eyes, and intercedes for them with her Son, and obtains of Him all that she asks. What can a son refuse his mother, and such a Son such a Mother? This brought St. Bernard to utter that celebrated sentence: "Let him be silent about thy praises, glorious Virgin, who has invoked thee in his troubles and necessities, and remembers thy aid to have been denied him"—*Sileat misericordiam tuam, Virgo beata, si quis est qui invocatam te in necessitatibus suis sibi meminerit defuisse.* But though in all temptations and on all occasions this remedy is very effectual, it is particularly so in this matter of which we treat, so pleasing is purity and chastity to the most pure Virgin. Some doctors say that the virginal purity which St. John the Baptist possessed in so high a degree that they say he never sinned even venially against it, was due to Our Lady's visit to St. Elizabeth, a visit which lasted three months and was, as St. Ambrose says, "a visit at once corporal and spiritual. Friendship and relationship was not the only cause why the Virgin stayed so long in the house of her cousin; it was likewise for the spiritual good of so great a prophet." If at the outset her visit was followed with so great benefit that the child rejoiced and was sanctified in his mother's womb, and St. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost at hearing the Virgin's greeting, what must have been the fruit and profit of her presence and conversation extending for so long a time!

Father Master Avila testifies to having witnessed, in persons troubled with this temptation, many beneficial effects gained through Our Lady the Virgin by the daily recitation of some prayer in honor of her Immaculate Conception and the virginal purity wherewith she conceived and bore the Son of God. Much to this purpose are some verses which the Church sings: "After childbirth thou didst remain a virgin inviolate. O Mother of God, intercede for us; Virgin of Virgins, meekest and mildest of all, keep us clean of sins, and make us meek and chaste." Here putting before her her own immaculate and perpetual virginity, we beg her to obtain for us this virtue, the better to please her and her most exalted Son.

A good remedy also is devotion to the saints and their relics. Caesarius relates a thing which he says was related to himself by the very person to whom it happened, a religious of the Cistercian Order named Bernard. Before he entered religion, going on a journey, he said that he carried with him, hung round his neck, a reliquary containing relics of the holy martyrs John and Paul. On his way an occasion of impurity occurred, and at the time he did not so much notice it, but still was negligent in resisting the temptation and repelling the thoughts that went with it. Then the holy relics began knocking at his breast, whereof, nevertheless, he took small heed, and saw nothing in it. The temptation ceased, and with it the knockings. But a little while after that the temptations returned, and at once the holy relics began their knockings again, as if to bid him see what he was about and cast off those evil thoughts. Then he fell in with the warning and recollected himself, and set about diligently resisting the temptation.

It is also a very helpful devotion frequently to visit the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and beg Our Lord's aid to obtain the victory, and above all the frequent reception of this Divine Sacrament is a signal remedy, according to those words of the prophet: *Thou hast set before me a table to give me virtue and strength against all my persecutors* (Psalm xxii. 5). The saints say that this is a grand remedy to meet all temptations, but particularly to overcome temptations of the flesh and preserve chastity. For this Divine Sacrament abates that incentive to sin which is called *fomes peccati;* it diminishes and appeases the motions of the flesh and the ardors of concupiscence, as water does fire, as St. Cyril says. They quote to this effect that text of the Prophet Zachary: *What is the good gift of God, and what the beautiful gift of the Lord, but the wheat of the elect and the wine that beareth virgins?* (Zach. ix. 17), of which we have spoken in its place.

CHAPTER VII

That Penance and Mortification of the Flesh Is a Very Good Remedy against Temptations to Impurity

THE blessed St. Jerome says: "The fiery arrows of the devil are to be extinguished by the rigor of fasting and watching," and such was his own practice. The same St. Jerome relates of St. Hilarion that, wearied and tired out with temptations of the flesh and evil thoughts, he waxed wroth with his body and said: "Ass, I will make thee stop thy kicking, for I will stop thy barley and give thee only straw. I am minded to kill thee with hunger and thirst, to lay heavy loads on thee, to weary thee with heat and cold, that thou mayest think rather of merely getting something to eat than of wantonness." An excellent remedy this, commended by the saints, and much used by the servants of God even without their feeling this war.

In the chronicles of the Order of blessed St. Francis it is related that someone asked a holy man why St. John Baptist, having been sanctified in his mother's womb, betook himself to the desert and there did such severe penance (Mark i. 4-6). The holy man answered: "Tell me why, when meat is fresh and good, do they salt it?" The other answered: "The better to preserve it from corruption." "So, then," said the other, "the glorious Baptist salted himself with penance that his sanctity might be better preserved from all corruption of sin," as the Church has it in her hymn. But if, even in time of peace, before these temptations are felt, it is proper to practise this exercise of penances and mortifications, how much more proper will it be in time of war! St. Thomas says, and he has it from Aristotle: *Castitas dicitur a castigatione*—"Chastity is so called from chastisement," because this vice must be restrained by chastisement of the body; and he says that unclean vices are like boys that need the whip because they are wanting in reason.

And if from this ill-treatment of the body there follows weakness or injury to bodily health, the same St. Jerome answers elsewhere: *Melius est stomachum dolere quam mentem*—"It is better for the stomach to be hurt than the soul." Better for the legs to totter for weakness than for chastity to waver. Still, discretion is always necessary; and so these remedies must be used according to the strength of the subject, and the temptation and the danger of each individual. There is a case of the war's being so violent as to threaten the loss of chastity; and then the right thing is to wager the body, at any risk, to secure the life of the soul. Physicians say here: *Extremis morbis extrema et exquisita sunt remedia*—"When the illness is deadly, and seems to be now making an end of the man, far-fetched and extraordinary remedies are used." So it must be in temptations and spiritual infirmities, when they are violent. Quite a different case is that of one struggling with a temptation that is no more than normal and ordinary, in which there is not so much danger to be apprehended, and, consequently, no such excessive pains are needed to overcome it.

But masters of spiritual life observe that these temptations of the flesh sometimes arise from the flesh itself, and redound on to the soul from the body. This is usually the case with youths and persons of sound health, in the enjoyment of bodily comforts. Then, as has been said, it is very profitable to apply the remedy there, since there is the root of the malady. At other times the temptation springs from the soul by suggestion of the devil. The sign of that is when the struggle is rather with thoughts and foul imaginations than with impure feelings and motions of the body; or, if there are any such, it is not that the temptation begins with them, but it begins with thoughts, of which those feelings and motions in the flesh are the result. And this is the case sometimes when the body is quite weak and almost dead, and yet those thoughts are most lively, as St. Jerome relates to have happened to himself; for when his body was weak, worn away and half-dead with the great penances and austerities which he practised, still he fancied himself at times to be in the midst of the dances and balls of the Roman ladies.

They also have down in their books another sign, which is when the temptations come out of season, just when the man would least wish to have them, and there is least occasion for them; when they pay no reverence to times of meditation or Mass, or to holy places in which, bad as a man may be, he yet generally has some sentiment of piety and reverence, and abstains from thinking of such things. Nay, sometimes the thoughts are monstrous and hideous beyond anything that the man ever heard of or considered or imagined. By the force with which they come, and the strange words that he hears interiorly, the man feels that they do not come of himself, but of another's saying and another's doing. All these things are manifest signs that this is a persecution coming of the devil, and does not arise from the flesh, although the body is affected thereby. Then other remedies are to be applied. And all say that for this end it is good to take up some lawful occupation calling for care and effort, so as to drive out of the mind those foul imaginations. To this intent St. Jerome, as he himself relates, set himself to learn Hebrew, a laborious task, but not unfruitful in his case.

The same St. Jerome tells of a young monk, a Greek by birth, who was in a monastery of Egypt, much harassed by this temptation of the flesh. He fasted much and did great penances, but still the temptation did not cease. The superior took this means to cure him. He commanded a monk, one of the most ancient of the brethren, a grave and rough man, to contradict this youth many times, and reprove him in harsh and injurious terms, and, after having rated him soundly, then to go to complain of him as if he had been the offended party and not the other monk. The ancient had the wit to do this right well, and at every step he took occasion of anything that turned up to scold him severely, and further than that he marched him straight off to trial before the superior, and had prearranged witnesses ready to say that this other monk had been disrespectful to his senior. The superior rebuked him and gave him sound good penances, as though he were in fault. This went on every day, and the poor fellow, seeing himself so ill-used and the victim of so much false witness, was much afflicted and very sad in his cell, and shed many tears, begging our Lord to turn to his defense, because he saw himself forlorn and abandoned, finding no human support—everybody was against him. There was no fault or breach of discipline committed in the house but they imputed it to him, and two or three would get up at once to testify against him, and draw upon his head penances and rebukes. This went on for a whole year. At the end of the year another monk asked him how the temptation of the flesh was going on. He answered: *Vivere mihi non licet, et fornicari licebit?*—"They won't let me so much as live, and do you ask me if I have any thought of that? I have no memory of that temptation." So his spiritual father cured him; with the greater pain and affliction he got quit of the lesser. And St. Jerome adds this, speaking to persons in religion: "If this man had been living alone, who ever would have aided him to overcome the temptation?" And in the rule of his monks this is one of the reasons that the saint gives to show how religion and a life under obedience befits us: "That you may not do what you have a mind to do; that you may eat what they give you, wear the dress that shall fall to your lot, do the task they put upon you, go to bed at night tired, and be made to get up when you have not had your fill of sleep"—*Ut non facias quod vis, comedas quod iuberis, vestiare quod acceperis, operis tui pensum persolvas, lassus ad stratum venias, necdum expleto somno surgere compellaris.* Thus, one thing upon another, you are so occupied by obedience that temptations find no room to enter, and you have no time to think of anything but of what you have got to do.

The blessed St. Francis used to say that he had learned by experience how the devils dreaded and kept aloof from severity and rigor of penance, and fastened on and tempted mightily those who treated themselves to comforts and delicacies. St. Athanasius relates of St. Anthony Abbot that he taught the same to his disciples. "Believe me, brethren, the devil greatly dreads the vigils of good men, their prayers and fasts and voluntary poverty." St. Ambrose quotes to this effect the saying of the prophet: *I clad myself in sackcloth, and sheltered and guarded my soul with fasting* (Psalm lxviii. 11-12). This, he says, is a good defense and armor against the enemy. We have also for this the teaching of Christ, Who told us, when He cast out the unclean spirit which the disciples had been unable to cast out: *This sort of devil goeth not out but by prayer and fasting* (Mark ix. 28). To prayer, He adds penance and fasting as a very proper means to scare away this sort of devils. Thus, under these temptations we should not rest satisfied with having recourse to prayer, but we should also exercise ourselves very specially in corporal works of penance and mortification, always with the consent of our confessor or superior, that in all things we may be more assured of our way.

A religious who was assailed by this temptation asked holy Brother Giles what remedy he should take against it. "What would you do, my brother," said the saint, "if a dog were coming to bite you?" The religious answered: "I would take a stone or a stick, and give it him till I made him run away from me." The saint said: "Do so, then, with your flesh which offers to bite you, and this temptation will fly away from you." So excellent is this remedy that sometimes any labor and pain, though it be but slight, is apt to divert and get rid of this temptation, as to stretch out one's arms in the form of a cross, to bend the knees, to strike one's breast, to take a discipline, to pinch oneself or pull out hairs, to stand for some time on one leg, and the like.

It is related in the Life of St. Andrew the Apostle that, while St. Andrew was at Corinth, an old man named Nicholas came to him and told him that for seventy-four years he had lived an immoral life, giving the rein to his disorderly appetites and surrendering himself to all manner of shameful lust; that a little while ago he had gone into a brothel to offend God, taking with him the Gospel; that a bad woman belonging to that establishment, with whom he sought to sin, held off from him in great terror, and besought him not to touch her, nor approach the place where she was, because she saw in him marvelous and mysterious things. Upon that, the old man asked St. Andrew to give him a remedy for that his great weakness and inveterate custom of sinning. The saint put himself in prayer and fasted five days, entreating our Savior to pardon this miserable old man and grant him the gift of chastity. At the end of the five days the apostle, still persevering in prayer, heard a voice from heaven which said to him: "I grant what thou askest Me for the old man, but it is My will that, as thou hast fasted for him, so he should fast and afflict himself on his own account if he wishes to be saved." The holy apostle bade Nicholas fast, and all the Christians to make prayer for him and crave mercy of the Lord. God heard them so effectually that Nicholas on his return home gave away all he had to the poor, and macerated his flesh with great austerity; and for the space of six months he ate nothing but dry bread, and his only drink was a little water. Having accomplished this penance, he passed out of this life; and God revealed to St. Andrew, who at that time was absent, that he was saved.

In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a monk's going to one of the ancient Fathers and asking him: "What shall I do to escape suffering the evil thoughts that assail me?" The old man said to him: "I have never been tried with the like thoughts." The monk was scandalized at that answer, and went off to another ancient Father and said to him: "I want you to know that such and such a Father has told me that he never either has been or is assailed with evil thoughts; and I am shocked because it seems to me that he has said a thing beyond the bounds of human nature." The Father said to him: "It cannot be without reason that man of God spoke to you such words; go back and beg his pardon, and he will tell you the reason why he said so." The monk went back and said to him: "Forgive me, Father, for going off the other day so foolishly without taking leave of you; I beg you further to tell me how you have escaped such assaults." The old man answered: "Because, ever since I have been a monk, I have never eaten my fill of bread, nor drunk enough water to satisfy me, nor slept enough; and this abstinence has kept me from the conflict of thoughts which you spoke of."

CHAPTER VIII

Of Other Remedies against Impure Temptations

THE blessed St. Gregory says that sometimes impure temptations and the molestations of evil thoughts and motions are apt to be remnants and remains of an evil past life, and a punishment and chastisement of former license and evil habits; and that then that fire has to be put out with tears, weeping copiously over the past.

St. Bonaventure says that it is a very good remedy in temptations to judge oneself deserving of this affliction and distress, to recognize that the faults and license of your past life quite merit such a chastisement, and suffer the same with patience and humility, saying with Joseph's brethren: *We deservedly suffer these things because we have sinned against our brother* (Gen. xlii. 21). In this way, says St. Bonaventure, you will more readily appease God, and the temptation will turn to your profit and advantage. This recognition of oneself as worthy of chastisement calls down the tender mercies of God; thus we read in Holy Scripture that the people of Israel made great use of it to obtain God's pardon (Dan. iii. 28; ix. 5).

Another very efficacious means to gain the favor and aid of the Lord, and come out victorious and triumphant over our enemies in all temptations and particularly in this, is to distrust ourselves and put our whole trust in God, of which we have treated largely elsewhere, and shall say something afterwards in speaking of the fear of God. It will be enough here to say in general that humility is the great remedy against temptations. The revelation is well known that was given to St. Anthony. Rapt in spirit one day, he saw the whole world full of nets, and cried out in tears: "Who shall escape, O Lord, so many nets as these?" And he heard a voice which said to him: "The humble man, Anthony." Be you, then, humble, and God will deliver you from these nets and temptations. *The Lord hath care of little ones; I humbled myself, and he saved me* (Psalm cxiv. 6). High mountains are stricken with storms and thunderbolts; it is the tall trees that the wind tears up; but reeds, osiers, and lowly shrubs, that bow and bend and sway from side to side, remain standing after the storm is over. In accordance with this it will also be a good and useful thing to gather humility and self-knowledge out of these impure temptations, seeing that such things come over us. We might say: "Thou seest here, O Lord, what I am. What was to be expected of this dunghill but the like odors? What can be expected of the earth that Thou hast cursed but thistles and thorns? This is the fruit that our earth is capable of yielding if Thou dost not cleanse it." These temptations and bad inclinations that we have furnish good ground for humbling ourselves. If poor and mean clothes aid a man to humble himself, as the saints say, how much more should we be helped to humility by such vile and filthy thoughts coming over us! Holy Brother Giles used to say that our flesh was like the unclean animal that with great eagerness rushes into the mud and takes its delight there; or like the beetle, whose life it is to wallow in dung. This consideration will greatly help us not to let ourselves be carried away by these thoughts.

And generally, in any temptation whatsoever, it is well not to take any account of that to which the temptation moves you, but to turn in at once upon oneself, humbling oneself, and saying: "How wicked I must be, that such things come into my head!" Thus you steal away bodily from the temptation, and the devil is left in the lurch. It is also a great help to enter into sentiments of confusion over the temptation and those bad thoughts and motions, as if they were your own fault, though you are very far from consenting to them. The devil rages and is devoured with pain at seeing such humility; and, proud creature that he is, cannot endure it. You cannot give him a greater slap in the face, or take any better means to make him sooner cease to tempt you, than to let him see that you will make capital out of what he contrived for your ruin. And, besides, this shows how far your will is from offending God, which is a thing that affords great satisfaction and sense of security. It will be also well at times to insult and mock the devil, as by saying: "Aroint thee, unclean spirit, thou shameful wretch! Very dirty thing thou art to bring such things into my memory." Proud creature that he is, he cannot bear being despised and affronted and taken for what he is worth, so he makes off.

St. Gregory relates of Dacius, Bishop of Milan, that on his way to the city of Constantinople he came to the city of Corinth. There were no lodgings for him except in a house that was deserted, and had been so for many years, because it was haunted by evil spirits. The holy man said, "Let us go there." They went; and about midnight, when the holy man was in bed, the devils began to make a great rout, in the guise of various animals, baying like sheep, roaring like lions, grunting like pigs, hissing like snakes. The holy man awoke with the noise and, getting angry with the fiends, said to them: "Oh, how well has come in and well has gone out your levy of forces! You wished to be like God, and you have been turned into beasts, dragons, and serpents; you make a very good imitation of what you in reality are." The evil spirits felt this insult so deeply, St. Gregory says, that they at once disappeared, and never again returned to that house, so that it could ever after be inhabited by all.

St. Athanasius relates of the blessed St. Anthony that he was much troubled by impure temptations, and one day there threw himself at his feet a little black man, filthy and dirty, lamenting how he had overcome many, and "by you alone I am rejected with scorn." The saint asked him: "Who art thou?" "I am," he said, "the spirit of fornication." "Henceforth, then," replied the saint, "I shall make little account of thee, since thou art such a vile and forlorn thing," and the vision at once disappeared. Christ our Redeemer, in the holy Gospel, calls the spirit of fornication *the unclean spirit* (Luke xi. 24). In this way we may affront and insult the devil, treating him for what he is, and making game of him. And sometimes this may be done by giving him a gesture of scorn, without saying anything or bandying reasons with him. Hereby, while nothing is said, much is meant.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Fear of God

WORK out your salvation with fear and trembling, says the Apostle (Phil. ii. 12). One of the things that will help us much to chastity, and generally to keep us in the grace of God, will be to walk always in holy fear and circumspection, distrusting ourselves, and having recourse to God, and putting our whole trust in Him. Thus says St. Bernard: *In veritate didici nihil aeque efficax esse ad gratiam promerendam, retinendam, recuperandam, quam si omni tempore coram Deo inveniaris non altum sapere, sed timere. Beatus homo qui semper est pavidus* (Prov. xxviii. 14)—"I have found by experience that there is no means so effectual for gaining the grace of God and keeping it, and recovering it if lost, as to walk always in fear before God, not presuming on oneself, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *Blessed is the man who is always in fear* (Prov. xxviii. 14)." And, contrariwise, one of the things that have brought even great saints to miserable falls has been trusting in themselves, and living with little fear and caution. *The wise man feareth and turneth aside from evil; the fool taketh leaps in full confidence* (Prov. xiv. 16). The fool is bold and self-confident, and for that reason he falls; but the wise man walks in fear, and so is delivered from evil. He who carries a precious liquor in a very brittle glass vessel, and passes by dangerous places where there is great concourse of people, and winds and tempests blow, if he does not know and fear for the brittleness of the glass, will not carry it with much circumspection, and so will easily break it and spill the liquor he was carrying. But he who knows how brittle the vessel is, and is afraid of its breaking, will guard it well, with nicety and care, and so he travels more safely. That is our case. We hold the liquor and most precious treasure of the grace and gifts of God in earthenware vessels, as the Apostle Paul says (II Cor. iv. 7), which may be broken easily and spill and lose everything; and we walk in the midst of many winds and tempests, and where there are many perilous encounters. Those who do not know nor dread this frailty and weakness, live in a false security and easily come to fall and lose themselves; but those who know and fear for themselves walk with great care and consideration how to preserve themselves, and so live more securely; and if there is any security in this life, it is theirs.

How comes it, think you, says St. Bernard, that there are people who have spent their youth in chastity, at the time when they were assailed with severe temptations, and having reached old age have miserably fallen into hideous sins, so foul that they themselves have been shocked at them? The reason is that in youth they lived in holy fear and humility, and when they saw themselves ever so near a fall, they had recourse to God, and were defended by Him; but afterwards, when they were in full possession of chastity, they began to be proud and confident of themselves and think themselves secure; then, when it came to that, they were cast off from the hand of God, and did what it was their own to do, that is, to fall.

The blessed St. Ambrose says that this is the reason why many who served God, and night and day meditated on His law, and crucified their flesh, and kept lusts and incentives to sensuality in check, and were very patient under great losses which they suffered, and very constant under the persecutions which they underwent, in the end have lost all their firmness and high standard of life and come to fall into great miseries; the reason is because they began to trust in their own virtue and holiness and the good works which they did, presuming and resting their confidence inordinately upon them. Thus, those whom the devil has been unable to persuade to the love of manifest vices, or to overthrow by assault of injuries and persecutions, he made softly to fall by lifting them up to presumption on themselves.

Holy Scripture and saints' lives are full of such examples, and the glorious Augustine weeps bitterly over them. "Many we have seen, and from our elders we have heard tell of many others, who had mounted to heaven and set their nest there among the stars. Woe is me, I cannot think of it without fear, how many of those stars have fallen from heaven! How many that were seated at the table of God and ate the bread of angels have come to desire to fill their bellies with the husks of swine! How many chastities, finer and *fairer than old ivory* (Lam. iv. 7), have been tarnished and turned black as coals!"

Who will not take fright at that instance which Lipeman relates, of James, a hermit, who, after having served the Lord more than forty years to the utmost length of the most rigorous penance, being now sixty years old, and celebrated for miracles and casting out devils, ended in this. They brought him a girl to cast out a devil from her. He did cast it out. Then they who had brought her did not dare to take her back with them, for fear the devil might cross them on the way, so he allowed her to stay with him. For his trusting and presuming on himself God permitted him to fall into sin. And because one sin calls on and invites another, he did a stupid thing—he murdered the girl and threw her body into a river. Then, to crown all, in despair of the mercy of God, he determined to return to the world and give himself wholly over to that course of vice and sin which so late in life he had entered upon. However, in the end, the mercy of God did not fail him. He entered into himself, did the most rigorous penance for ten years, recovered his former sanctity, and ended a canonized saint.

Who will not take alarm at that other monk, of whom the blessed St. Anthony said: "Today a great pillar is fallen"? Who will not tremble at that? Who will trust in his own holiness, or his saying, "I am a religious"? See how others have fallen, who were better men than you, and had more virtue and gifts of God than you have. The glorious St. Jerome says: "Can it be that you are holier than David, or wiser than Solomon, or stronger than Samson?" Yet all these have fallen; yea, one of Christ's twelve apostles fell, taught in such a school, conversing with such a

Master and such fellow scholars, hearing such discourses and sermons, seeing such deeds of power and miracles! And one of the seven deacons, Nicholas, chosen by the apostles, on whom the Holy Ghost had come down as upon the rest (Acts vi. 1-16), became afterwards not only a heretic, but an heresiarch and father of heretics (Apoc. ii. 6, 15). Who will not fear that old serpent? Remember, says St. Jerome, that our first parents fell, and were cast out of the Paradise where they were enriched by the gifts of God and by original justice, and all that through pride. St. Augustine says that the first man would never have been deceived had he not in his heart departed from God by pride; for true is that saying of the Wise Man, since it is the saying of the Holy Ghost: *Pride goeth before a fall, and before ruin the spirit is lifted up* (Prov. xvi. 18; xviii. 12). Before ruin and perdition there precedes elation of heart.

If these examples of men are not sufficient for you, go on and mount higher; and there in heaven you will find examples of angels who, for pride and presumption, fell from the high estate in which God had created them. *Lo, even his ministers were not steadfast, and in his very angels he found matter of reproach; how much more shall they be consumed as by the moth who dwell in tenements of clay, and whose foundation is in the dust. From morning to evening they shall be undone* (Job iv. 18-20). St. Gregory ponders well to our purpose these words of Job. If in that finest gold there was found so much dross; if in the most noble nature of the angels there was no security nor stability, what shall become of us who dwell in tenements of clay, since clay is easily broken, molders, and falls to pieces! How shall that soul not fear; how shall she presume of herself, she who is in a body like this, which of itself engenders the moth, and in ourselves we have the root of our perdition! The comparison of the moth is very just, says St. Gregory, because, as the moth is born of the garment and wastes and destroys that very garment whereof it is born, so in us our flesh is as a garment to the soul, which garment also engenders its moth, for thence proceeds the fleshly temptation which makes war on us; and so man comes to be *consumed as by a moth* (Job xiii. 28), when the temptation which springs from his very flesh comes to consume and destroy him.

He says very well *as by the moth,* because, as the moth does harm to the garment and makes no noise, so the moth of this evil and perverse inclination of our flesh, this *fomes peccati,* this food and incentive of sin which we have in us, does harm without noise and almost without our feeling it, for often we do not see it, nor take any account of it, until the harm is done. But if those angelic and heavenly spirits, who had no body to engender in them this moth, nor to make on them continual war and contradiction and consume them, did not last nor persevere in good, what man shall be so bold as to trust in himself, having within him the cause of his temptation and perdition!

Let us, then, learn to walk always in this fear and circumspection; and as for him who does not always walk so, you may well mourn over him, for he is near a fall. It is not I, but the Holy Ghost, Who says: *If thou dost not earnestly keep thyself in the fear of the Lord, thy house will soon be overturned* (Ecclus. xxvii. 4). If you do not walk always in fear and circumspection, shunning danger and guarding yourself against occasions, casting off an evil thought at once and forestalling temptation, you will soon fall.

And let no one deceive himself by saying: "Oh, I do not feel those temptations, those motions and dangers that come of conversing with other people and looking at them; those things make no impression on me." Do not trust in that; the devil seeks in that way to lull you into a sense of security, that afterwards, at the end of some time, when you are off your guard, he may trip you up and throw you to the ground, or rather, down to hell. The saints here remark that, the more favors God does to a man and the more He imparts His gifts to him, the more should that man walk in fear, because the devils are all the more solicitous and anxious to make him fall. *He is dainty in his food,* said the Prophet Habacuc (i. 16). It is after these men that the evil spirits go; and the devil makes more account of getting one servant of God to fall, one religious who is aiming at perfection, than of many others, men of the world, as will appear by the examples which we shall quote presently. So St. Jerome, in his epistle to Eustochium, exhorting her to look to herself and not be careless in the high state of virginity, says to her: "The higher the state you are in, and the more gifts you have of God, you must not be proud on that account, nor presume on yourself; rather you should walk in greater fear. You are laden with gold, and so should have all the more fear of robbers, and beware of evil and dangerous alleys. Think not to find peace on an earth full of briars and thorns"—*Nolo tibi venire superbiam de proposito, sed timorem. Onusta incedis auro; latro tibi vitandus est. Stadium est vita haec mortalis, hic contendimus ut alibi coronemur. Pacem arbitraris in terra quae tribulos generat et spinas?* There is no security in this life, but warfare; you have always to stand sentinel. We are sailing on a very rough sea in the frail cockleshell boat of this flesh, surrounded by many enemies, who sniff the air and raise all the storms they can to drown us, never wearying, never sleeping, hoping for some occasion to get at us. So the glorious Apostle St. Paul warns us in the words: *Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall* (I Cor. x. 12). *Be ever on the watch,* keeping a good lookout, *and take care not to sin* (I Cor. xv. 34). If there is anything that can hold us up and secure us, it is this walking always in holy fear and apprehension.

I have heard one thing told of our Society which makes much to the purpose of what we are saying; I will tell it as I heard it. In the early days of the Society, when Father Peter Faber and Father Anthony de Araoz came from the kingdom of Portugal to Castile—sent by the King of Portugal, Don John III, with the Princess Doña Maria, his daughter, who was to marry the king, Don Philip II, who was then prince royal—the members of our Society had the run of the palace, and heard the confessions of nearly all the dames and ladies of the court. There were not so many old then as now; they were all in their youth. The world was astonished, and with reason, at what is set down for a wonder in the Life of our holy Father Ignatius: "Such youth with such chastity." On the one hand they were seen in the midst of so many dangerous occasions, and on the other with such an aroma of chastity about them. This became the talk of the court. They say that the king one day in conversation with Father Araoz said to him: "I have heard said that the members of the Society carry with them a herb that has the virtue of preserving chastity." Father Araoz, who was a good courtier, answered him: Your majesty's story is true." "For the life of you, tell me what the herb is." "Sire, the herb which the members of the Society carry about with them to preserve chastity is the fear of God." That it is which works this miracle; for it has the virtue of putting the devils to flight, like Toby's fish thrown upon the live coals.

In confirmation of this there makes the saying of the Wise Man: *Upon him that feareth the Lord no harm shall come, for God will preserve him and deliver him from all evil* (Ecclus. xxxiii. 1). And elsewhere he says: *The fear of the Lord driveth away sin and by means thereof men keep aloof from evil* (Prov. xv. 27). Let us, then, always carry this herb with us; let us walk always in this fear; and let us understand that there is no chastity nor sanctity secure but in the holy fear of God. So the Holy Scripture says that we should grow old in it. *Keep the fear of God* *and grow old in it* (Ecclus. ii. 6); to give us to understand that not beginners alone, but old servants in the house of the Lord, must live in this fear; not only the guilty, who have good matter for fear, but also the just, who have not done anything so much to cause it. The former fear because they have fallen; the latter that they may not fall. Past ill deeds inspire the former with fear; dangers in the future should inspire the latter. Blessed is the man who walks always in this holy fear (Prov. xxviii. 14).

CHAPTER X

Of the Great Advantages That There Are in This Fear of God

THAT we may the better esteem and appreciate this holy fear, and endeavor always to preserve it in ourselves, we will enumerate some of the great advantages that it contains. In the first place, this fear of God is no source of discouragement or dismay, nor does it make men cowardly and pusillanimous; rather it makes them strong and confident and courageous, as the saints say of humility, for it makes them distrust themselves and put all their confidence in God. St. Gregory says this very well on the text of Job: *Where is thy fear, where thy strength?* (Job iv. 6). Rightly, he says, does Job join fear with strength; for the way of God is just the opposite to the way of the world, where boldness breeds fortitude; and fear, weakness and cowardice. But here it is the other way about: boldness breeds weakness; and fear, great strength, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *In the fear of the Lord is the confidence of our strength* (Prov. xiv. 26). And the reason is that, when one fears God, he finds nothing to fear anywhere in the world; all temporal things he despises and holds them of no account. *He that feareth the Lord will have no dread of anything; he will not fear, because the*

Lord is his hope (Ecclus. xxiv. 16). Fear is a sort of subjection to the object feared, as to a thing that may do us harm. But he that fears God and puts in Him all his confidence, has nothing to fear from the world, nor from the persecutor, nor from death, nor from the devil, nor from hell. Nothing of all these can harm him, nor touch a hair of his head, without God's leave; and that is a source of strength so great that there is nothing like it in all the strong men of the world, for God then is the man's strength. *The Lord is a covering protection to them that fear him* (Psalm xxiv. 14).

Further, this holy fear of the Lord causes no anxiety or bitterness of heart; it is not painful nor fatiguing, but rather it is very pleasant and cheerful. Worldly fear of loss of social position or property, servile fear of hell and death, does cause sadness and melancholy; but the holy and filial fear that good sons have of grieving and offending a dearly-cherished Father, comforts the soul, makes the heart tender, and softens the affections, since it makes us live continually in the love of God, putting up such prayers as this: "Suffer me not, O Lord, ever to be separated from Thee; rather may I die than offend Thee." *The fear of the Lord is glory and exultation, and mirth and a crown of gladness; the fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and give gladness and joy and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord things shall go well in the end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed* (Ecclus. i. 11-13). With what abundance of words and what variety of sentiments does the Wise Man set forth the joy and gladness that the fear of the Lord carries with it! This is not a fear to make men tremble like slaves for dread of tortures. It is a fear that takes its origin from love of God; so, the more one loves Him, the more does one fear to offend and displease Him. This we see is the attitude of a good son to his father and of an honorable woman to her husband; the more fondly she cherishes him, the harder she works to secure that there shall never be anything in the house that might give him any pain.

To say in one word all the praises, favors, prerogatives, and pre-eminences that Holy Scripture assigns to the humble, all may be found said of them that fear God, and almost in the same terms. Thus, as Scripture says that God looks and fixes His eyes on the humble and poor, so it says of them that fear God: *The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 19). And as it says that God exalts the humble and fills them with good things, it says the same of them that fear Him. *His mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear Him;* so says the most holy Queen of Angels in her canticle (Luke i. 50). And holy Judith: *Lord, they that fear Thee shall be great before Thee in all things* (Jud. xvi. 19). And as the saints say that humility is the guardian of all the virtues, and no virtue can stand without humility, so they say also of the fear of God; wherefore the Prophet Isaias calls this holy fear *the treasure-house of the Lord* (Isaias xxxiii. 6), because in it the virtues are well kept and treasured up. And on the contrary they say that, as the ship without weight and ballast is not safe on her voyage, any puff of wind being enough to capsize her, so neither is that soul secure that takes her course without this ballast of fear, fear being the soul's ballast, which corrects the levity of the heart and keeps it firm and constant, so that the wind of favors, human and divine, may not lift it up and capsize it. However rich the soul be, if she lacks this ballast, she cannot go on her way securely.

St. Gregory calls this fear "the anchor of our heart"; *ancora cordis est pondus timoris.* St. Jerome says, "Fear is the safeguard of virtues," while a false security facilitates a fall. And Tertullian: "Fear is the foundation of our salvation. By fearing we shall be on our guard, and by being on our guard we shall be saved; he who walks with circumspection and care may rest secure"—*Timor funda-*

mentum est salutis. Timendo cavebimus, cavendo salvi erimus; qui solicitus est, is vere poterit esse securus.

Finally, the Wise Man in many chapters of the Sapiential Books goes on extolling the great excellences and marvels of wisdom, and, to sum up and conclude all, he says that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and so says holy Job (xxviii. 28). Thus all that is said of wisdom we may say also of the fear of God. The Wise Man even goes on to say that the fear of God is the *plenitude and consummation of wisdom,* and that its fruits are copious and abundant (Ecclus. i. 20). And he comes to a conclusion in these words: *Great assuredly is he that hath found wisdom, but he is not above him that feareth God. The fear of God overtoppeth and encompasseth all things; blessed is he to whom is given this gift of fear. To what shall we compare him who possesseth so great a gift as this?* (Ecclus. xxv. 13-15).

CHAPTER XI

In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the "Spiritual Meadow" it is said: "One of the Fathers of the Thebaid, who was the son of a priest of idols, related to us that, when he was quite a young lad, he used to be with his father in the temple, and often saw how his father offered sacrifices to his idol. One time he came in secretly behind his father, and saw Satan seated on a high platform, and all his hellish rabble around him, and one of his chief officers came and paid obeisance to him. Satan said to him: 'Whence comest thou?' He said: 'I have been in such and such a province, and I have raised in it many wars and quarrels, along with much shedding of blood, and I have come to tell you.' Satan asked him: 'And how much time hast thou spent in doing this?' He answered, 'Thirty days.' Satan then ordered him to be scourged, saying that he had spent much and done little. After that there came another, and made his obeisance to the infernal captain, who asked him: 'And thou, whence dost thou come?' He answered: 'I have been at sea, and have raised many storms, and sunk many ships, and drowned many men, and have come to give thee an account of it.' He asked: 'How much time has thou taken to do that?' He answered, 'Twenty days.' He ordered him to be scourged for having done so little in twenty days. A third came and paid his obeisance, and Satan asked him: 'Thou, where hast thou been?' He answered: 'I have been to such and such a city, where there was a marriage being celebrated, and I set them by the ears, and many were killed, and among them the bridegroom himself.' Satan said: 'And how long didst thou take?' 'Only ten days.' And notwithstanding all the mischief that he had made, he ordered him to be scourged, saying: 'Thou oughtest to have done many more things in ten days.' Things being at this, there came another, and paid obeisance to his evil chief, who asked him: 'Whence comest thou?' 'I come from the desert, where for forty years I have been tempting and assailing one monk, and at the end of that time, only last night, I overcame him, and made him fall into the sin of fornication.' When he heard this, Satan rose up and kissed him, and took the crown that he wore and put it on his head, and made him sit on a seat by his side, and said to him: 'Thou hast done a grand piece of work.' When I heard this, I said: 'Truly great and excellent is the religion and order of monks.' So I left my parents' house, and became a monk." Here note, by the way, that from a source whence others conceive an ill opinion of religious, because some religious has fallen into some weakness, this man conceived, and rightly conceived, a higher opinion of religious life, and embraced it.

In the Lives of the Fathers we read that a holy hermit was carried by an angel to a place where there was a monastery of religious, and saw there a multitude of devils, fluttering about like flies in all the offices and places of the monastery. Then, going to the market place of the city, he saw only one solitary devil, and he had no work, but was sitting idle on the city gate. He asked the reason of this, and the angel, his guide, told him that those people in the city all did what the devil wanted, and therefore one devil was enough for all; but in the monastery all were doing their best to resist the devil, and that was the reason why so many devils were at them to tempt them and make them fall.

Palladius recounts a memorable example, which is related also in the Lives of the Fathers, of a monk who for many years had exercised himself in good works and holy exercises proper to a religious, and had made great progress. At the end of that time he gave way to vain complacency in himself and boasting. Wherefore God permitted him miserably to fall into a sin of impurity with the devil, who appeared to him in the form of a very handsome woman, who was wandering lost in the desert. He readily gave her welcome, and talked at length with her, laughing and holding her by the hand. Finally he quite gave himself up to sin with her; and when he would fain have put it in act, the figure disappeared in his arms with a loud shriek, over which were heard loud peals of laughter from many devils, floating in the air and saying to him: "O monk, monk, who didst raise and exalt thyself to the heavens, how hast thou sunk into the abyss; learn, then, more from today that he who exalts himself shall be humbled." With these words it seemed that the devils were scoffing at him and making game of him. The wretched man stopped not there, but, having spent that night and the following day in loud lamentations and shame, he fell into despair, went back into the world, and gave reins to his vicious inclinations.

St. John Climacus tells the story, which we referred to above, of a youth of whom we read in the Lives of the Fathers that he attained so high a degree of virtue as to have empire over wild beasts, whom he made serve the monks in the monastery. St. Anthony likened him to a richly laden vessel on the high seas, whose end he could not answer for. Now this youth, so fervent and so holy, came to fall miserably. While he was weeping over his sin, he said to some monks who came that way: "Tell the old man," that is, St. Anthony, "to pray to God for me that He will vouchsafe to grant me ten days to do penance." On hearing this, the old man wept bitterly, and said with great grief of heart: "A great pillar of the Church has fallen today." At the end of five days the monk above-mentioned died. Thus he who at first, says St. John Climacus, had empire over wild beasts, was in the end overthrown and mocked by most cruel savages, and he who a little before had for nourishment the bread of heaven, came afterwards to seek his nourishment in mire and filth. Father Anthony, in his great prudence, would not state clearly the nature of his fall, for he knew that it was fornication.

Father Master Avila quotes an instance of a holy hermit to whom God had granted to know the great danger to which he lay exposed in this life; and, considering that, he put over his head a hood of mourning and covered his face in such manner that he could see nothing but the ground he was about to tread upon, and never more would speak to man, and never more took his eyes off the ground, weeping to see himself in such danger as man lives in. And when there came many people to see him in his cell out of curiosity for the great change that had come over him, and asked the reason of this novelty and of the extreme course he had so suddenly taken, he never answered anything else but: "Let me alone, because I am a man." Another saint used to say: "Woe is me, because I am still capable of offending God mortally."

TWENTY-FIRST TREATISE

ON THE VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE

CHAPTER I

Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Obedience

OBEDIENCE is better than victims, and to hearken to command than to offer the fat of rams (I Kings xv. 22). The historical occasion is well known in which these words were uttered. It was when King Saul disobeyed the commandment given him by God to destroy Amalek and leave nothing alive, and he kept the better portion of the spoil for sacrifice. The Prophet Samuel said to him on the part of God: *Doth God want holocausts and victims, and not rather obedience to the voice of the Lord?* Not at all; *for obedience is better than sacrifice, and better is it to hear and obey God than to offer him the fat of rams.* Resting on this passage, and on many others in Holy Writ where obedience is greatly extolled and the high value that God sets on it, the saints utter many commendations of this virtue. St. Augustine, in various places, treats the question why God gave command to man not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. His first answer is that it was to show and give men to understand the excellence and value of this virtue of obedience, and the great evil of disobedience. And this was well shown by the event. For the evil and hardship that followed upon sin were not caused by the fruit of the tree. The tree was not evil nor harmful of itself, but good; God had created all things very good, and had no mind to put any evil thing in Paradise. It was disobedience, and the violation of God's commandment and the obedience due to Him, that made the evil. So St. Augustine says that nothing could better show the great evil of disobedience than the sight of the evil that came upon man by the mere eating, against the commandment of God, of a thing that had no harm in it, and could have done harm to nobody, but for the eating of it being forbidden. Hereby their fault is well shown up who dare to disobey and fail in an observance because it is a slight matter. The sin is not in the thing, but in the disobedience; and that holds even when the thing is slight. St. Augustine gives a second reason for this prohibition. Man being created to serve God, it was fitting that God should impose upon him some precept prohibitive of something, that he might recognize that he had a master, and hold himself for a subject. Unless something were forbidden him and something commanded, he would have had no matter in which to subject himself and recognize that he had a master. The virtue of obedience was meant to be a means for him to recognize God and merit thereby. And he goes on saying many good things in praise of this virtue.

One of the reasons why God became man, he says, was to teach us and commend to us this virtue of obedience, and give us an example thereof. Man had been disobedient unto death; the Son of God came to be obedient even unto death. The gate of heaven had been closed to us, and the grace of God lost, by the disobedience of Adam; it was opened to us by the obedience of Christ. And in the reward and glory of the humanity of Christ, the saint says that there also the Lord wished to show us the virtue and merit of obedience by crowning it with such sublime glory. *He made himself obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross, for which cause God hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth* (Phil. ii. 8-10).

Many are the excellences and grand things that the saints say of this virtue, but here we will mention only one, which will be sufficient for us; and that is, that it is the most proper and principal virtue of the religious. St. Thomas, who carries things with the rigor of the schools, treats this question, whether the vow of obedience is the chief of the three vows that we make in religion. And he answers, Yes; and gives three very good and profitable reasons for it.

The first is, because by the vow of obedience a man gives and offers to God more than by the other vows. By the vow of poverty a man offers to God his possessions and riches; by the vow of chastity, his own body; but by the vow of obedience he offers his own will and judgment, offering himself entirely to God, which is more than all the rest. And so says St. Jerome: "To leave gold and riches is the part of beginners; many philosophers have done that. But to offer oneself and give oneself over entirely to God is proper to Christians; it is an apostolic work because it is an imitation of the apostles who did the like"—*Aurum deponere incipientium est, non perfectorum; fecit hoc Crates Thebanus, fecit Antisthenes: seipsum offerre Deo proprium Christianorum est et apostolorum.* And the saint dwells upon the fact that Christ did not say: *Verily I say to you that ye who have left all things shall sit on twelve thrones,* but *ye who have followed me* (Mark xix. 28). To follow Christ is the most perfect thing; and in it, as St. Thomas says, is included the counsel of obedience, since he who obeys follows the will and opinion of another.

The second reason is, because the vow of obedience includes and comprises under itself the other vows of religion, while itself is not included or comprised under them. Though the religious binds himself by a particular vow to observe chastity and poverty, yet these virtues also fall under obedience, to which virtue it is proper to guard these and many others. So very true is this that in some ancient orders, as the Carthusians and Benedictines, in their profession they make express mention only of the vow of obedience: "I promise obedience according to the rule." And under that is understood the vow of chastity and poverty, according to the statutes and custom of the order.

The third reason is, because a thing is better and more perfect, the nearer it approaches and conducts us to its end. Now, obedience is that which unites religious most closely with the end of their order, since it is that which tells and commands them to practise the things which are directed to gain the end thereof. Thus it bids us occupy ourselves with our own spiritual advancement and that of our neighbor, to attend to our meditation and mortification, to engage in hearing confessions, preaching, teaching Christian doctrine, and all other ministries necessary for the helping of souls; and so in other orders.

Hence St. Thomas draws a very important conclusion. It is that the vow of obedience is the most essential thing in religion; it is that which makes a religious and constitutes him in the state of religion. St. Bonaventure agrees with this, and says that all the perfection of a religious consists in entirely giving up his own will and following obedience; and for that reason we make the vows of poverty and chastity, that by relinquishing property and fleshly delights and care of house and family we may be the lighter and the more disengaged to fulfil the vow of obedience, as being the principal thing. Little will it profit you, he says, to have given up property and wealth if you do not also give up your own will and follow the will of obedience.

Surius relates some notable sayings of St. Fulgentius Bishop, who was abbot of a monastery. This is one of them, dealing with obedience: "Do you know," he says, "who are true religious? They who have no will of their own, but give themselves up, prompt and indifferent, for anything that the superior shall command them. This it is to be a religious, neither to will nor to will not." He does not say that you will be a religious if you take many disciplines, or wear rough hairshirts, or are strong enough to work hard all day long, or be a great doctor or preacher, but if you be very obedient and have no will of your own. *Illos veros monachos esse, qui mortificatis voluntatibus suis parati essent nihil velle, nihil nolle, sed abbatis tantummodo consilia vel praecepta servare.*

Thus obedience is the virtue most essential in religion, the virtue that makes one be a religious. It is that which pleases God more than sacrifice and victims; in that is included and contained poverty, chastity, and all other virtues. If you are obedient, you will be poor, chaste, humble, silent, suffering, mortified, and master of all virtues. And this is no exaggeration, but downright truth. For virtues are acquired and gained by practising their acts, and that is the way in which God means to give them to us; now it is just this practice that obedience gives us. All the rules that we have, and all the orders of obedience given us, are an exercise of virtues. Let yourself be carried by obedience, and embrace heartily all the occasions that are offered you. Sometimes they will exercise you in patience, sometimes in humility, sometimes in poverty, sometimes in temperance, sometimes in charity, and in this way you will go growing in all virtues as you grow in obedience. That is what our Father says: "As this virtue shall flourish, so will all other virtues flourish and bear the fruit that I look for in your souls." It is the common doctrine of the saints to call this virtue the mother and prime source of all virtues. "A very great virtue," St. Augustine says, "and what we may call the prime source and mother of all the rest." And St. Gregory: "Obedience is the one virtue that inserts and engenders in the soul all other virtues and, after inserting, preserves them." So they explain that saying of Proverbs: *The obedient man shall speak of victories* (Prov. xxi. 28); that is how St. Gregory and St. Bernard read the text. The obedient man shall gain not one, but many victories. He will gain all virtues who shall be thoroughly obedient. If, then, you wish for a short and compendious lesson how to advance much and attain to perfection in a little time, it is this: Take care to be very obedient. That is a very short road, quite a short cut to that end. So says St. Jerome: "O happy and abundant grace of obedience, wherein is contained the sum of all virtues! By the simple method of obeying in all things that obedience shall command, in a short time one will find himself perfect and full of virtues" —*O felix et abundans gratia! In obedientia summa virtutum inclusa est; nam simplici gressu hominem ducit ad Christum.*

St. John Climacus says that, coming to a monastery, he saw white-haired old men, of venerable aspect, who were like children, prompt and ready to obey and run about here and there; some of them had been fifty years serving under the standard of obedience. He asked them what comfort and fruit they had found from such great obedience and toil. Some answered that they had thereby attained to the depth of humility, and thereby were delivered from many assaults of the enemy; others, that they had thereby come to lose all sense of injury and insult. Thus obedience is a means of gaining all virtues; and, therefore, those ancient Fathers took it for a good sign of anyone's being on the road to perfection if they saw him quite subject and obedient to his spiritual father.

St. Dorotheus tells of his disciple Dositheus that, being a youth of noble birth and delicate breeding, he was seized with fear of judgment and the strict account that he had to render to God. God fulfilled in him the petition of the prophet: *Pierce my flesh with thy fear; I have been afraid of thy judgments* (Psalm cxviii. 120). Smitten and pierced with this fear, he entered religion to be able to render a good account of himself. He was of a weak constitution, and could not follow the community; he could not rise for matins, nor eat the same food as the rest. As he could not do this, he deliberated within himself and resolved to devote himself entirely to obedience, serving with the greatest alacrity and diligence in the guest house and in other offices of humility. Within five years he died of consumption. God revealed to the abbot of the monastery that this youth had attained the reward of Paul and Anthony. The monks complained to God, saying: "Where, O Lord, is Thy justice, that Thou wouldst have a man who never fasted, and was reared in luxury, set on a level with us, who bear the full burden of religion—*Pondus diei et aestus* (Matt. xx. 12)? What are we the better for all the labor we have gone through?" God answered that they did not know the merit and value of obedience, and that thereby this youth had in a short time merited more than others with their great austerities.

CHAPTER II

Of the Need That We Have of the Virtue of Obedience

THE blessed St. Jerome, exhorting religious to obey their superior, the better to persuade them shows at length by many examples the need there is in all cases of following and obeying one superior. In the political constitution of the world we see that there is one emperor, one king, one supreme judge of a province. When Rome was founded, even by two brothers, a joint reign of them both was found impossible, but one slew the other. Jacob and Esau, even in their mother's womb, wrestled and warred with one another, which was to come out first. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy we see that all is reduced to one vicar of Christ, and in every district and diocese there is one sole bishop and prelate. In all things we see the necessity of this subordination and subjection to one. In an army, however great it may be, there is always one captain general, whom all obey; on board every ship there is one captain, and there would be great disunion and confusion in the crew, nor would they ever reach port, if everyone sought to steer and guide the ship according to his own fancy, and there were not one whose word was law. And even in the smallest house, though it be but a poor cottage, there must be one whom the rest obey; and without that provision nothing can be preserved, nothing last long, neither house, nor city, nor kingdom. *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be left desolate* (Luke xi. 17). And we see this in all things, not only in rational creatures, as in men and angels —in the latter there is subordination of one hierarchy to another—but also among brute beasts, who have a captain and guide whom they follow. Bees have their officers, and one is the chief, the queen bee, whom they all acknowledge and obey. Going as far as cranes, we find that those birds form up in a squadron and fall into rank, making a letter Y, or Greek capital Upsilon, and so they go, all following one. The heavenly spheres also are under the *primum mobile,* or prime mover, and follow its movement. And not to weary you with more examples, says St. Jerome, what I want you to gather from all this is that you should understand how it behooves you to live under the obedience of a prelate, and in company with many religious brethren, servants of God, who by their example help and encourage you to your end.

Our Father, though he would have us grow in all virtues and spiritual graces, in this particularly demands of us great perfection. He desires that, as other orders are marked and distinguished, some by poverty, others by penances and austerities, others by choir, others by enclosure, so the Society should be distinguished by the virtue of obedience, and that we should all make it our endeavor to mark and render ourselves conspicuous thereby, understanding that on this single point pivots all the good of the Society. And with much reason does our Father ask that of us; because the end of the Society, after its own perfection, is the spiritual advancement of its neighbor, and to help souls to salvation all the world over. Then its members must be ready and on the alert, always and instantly to go all the world over to exercise their ministries, like light horsemen riding to the rescue where the need is greatest. And this is the meaning of the fourth vow which the professed make of obeying the sovereign pontiff in regard of missions; that is, to go to any part of the world where the sovereign pontiff sends them, whether it be to a Christian land or among infidels or heretics, without making any excuse and without asking for their journey-money. And all must show this promptitude and indifference, not only for the missions to which the sovereign pontiff sends them, but also for wherever their immediate superiors send them. And besides that, they must be ready to take up any office or ministry, and do anything else commanded them. For this a great stock of obedience is necessary, seeing that in the Society there is such a diversity of occupations, ministries, and grades, some higher than others. It was a marvelous artifice and contrivance of our Father to insist so much on obedience, and ask us to signalize ourselves and come forward in that line, because he knew that many difficulties would cross our path, and that we should be pulled in all directions, and many a hash would be made of us.

A father of the Society used to say a thing that I wish we could all say and feel. He said: "I am not afraid of any order of obedience, because I am ready and prepared to do anything whatsoever that obedience shall command me." He said well, and it is a truth well borne out by experience. A religious who is mortified, prompt and indifferent to do anything that they may command him, has nothing to fear from any order of obedience or from any superior, nor does he mind whether his superior be Pedro or Sancho, or of this or that condition of life. A good religious is independent of these things; to be dependent upon them and afraid of them argues imperfection. On the saying of St. Paul: *Wouldst thou not fear the justice? Do well, and thou shalt have praise from him* (Rom. xiii. 3-4), St. Chrysostom says: "The thief and the malefactor is afraid of the justice and turns pale at the sight of the constable, thinking that he is after him; but it is not the prince or the justice that causes this fear, but only his own wickedness and evil conscience. Would you have no fear of king or justice? Live a good life, and not only shall you not fear him, but you shall have much praise from him." So it is also here in religion. Those fears and alarms are not caused by the superior, but by your own imperfection and want of mortification. Would you be fearless and never panic-stricken in religion? Be thoroughly obedient and aim at thorough indifference and resignation in all things. He who lives in this way shall enjoy much peace, great rest and tranquillity, and religious life will be for him a paradise on earth.

CHAPTER III

Of the First Degree of Obedience

OUR Father, speaking of obedience in the Third Part of the Constitutions, says: "It is very expedient for spiritual advancement, and quite necessary, that all should give themselves up to perfect obedience." And he goes on explaining what this perfect obedience is. He says that it should not only be in the exterior execution, carrying out in act the order given, which is the first degree of obedience, but it should extend also to the will and the heart, conforming our will to that of the superior, willing and willing not as he wills and wills not, which is the second degree of obedience. And we are not to stop here, but pass on further, conforming our judgment also to that of the superior, so that you should think as the superior thinks, and judge that the order given is a good order, which is the third degree of obedience. When there is this conformity in deed, will, and understanding, then the obedience will be perfect and entire; and if any of these conditions be wanting, it will be neither perfect nor entire.

Starting with the first degree, we must be very diligent and punctual in the carrying out of an order of obedience.

St. Basil asks with what care and diligence we should apply ourselves to the things we are commanded, and answers that it should be with the same diligence wherewith a man who greatly loves his own life applies himself to the things necessary to preserve it, or as a hungry man sets about his dinner. Even with greater diligence, he says, inasmuch as life everlasting, which is earned by obedience, is more noble and excellent than temporal life. The blessed St. Bernard says: "The truly obedient man knows no such thing as delay, or 'Oh, tomorrow' or 'Afterwards,' nor does he say 'I'll go about it presently,' as lazy people do; but he applies his hearing to understand the order, his feet to go and fulfil it, his hands to put it in execution, and so punctually does he carry it out that he seems to forestall and get the start of him who gives the order"—*Fidelis obediens nescit moras, fugit crastinum, ignorat tarditatem, praecipit praecipientem, parat oculos visui, aures auditui, linguam voci, manus operi, itineri pedes, totum se colligit ut imperantis colligat voluntatem.*

Our Father, speaking of putting the order into execution, and the punctuality which we should observe in obedience, says that we should be as prompt in answering the bell or the voice of the superior as if the signal came from Christ our Lord Himself. We should omit finishing any work we have commenced, leaving even a letter of the alphabet incomplete. He says two things: first, that, when we hear the bell or the voice of the superior, we should reckon that it is the voice of God that we hear. A good reflection for the occasion is to think of the saying of the three Wise Men Kings, when they saw the star that appeared to them: *This is the sign of the great king; let us go and adore and offer our gifts.* (Epiphany Office). So, on hearing the bell or the voice of the superior, it is good to say: "There is the voice of God; let us go at once to obey." The second thing, he says, is that we should leave unfinished the letter of the alphabet that we have begun to form. Cassian, speaking of the monks' occupations, says that they were all occupied, this one in writing out his thoughts on pious subjects, that one in meditation, that other in copying manuscripts; but as soon as they heard the bell or the voice of the superior, they rushed out of their cells *certatim,* vying with one another who should answer the call first, in such haste that he who was writing omitted to finish the letter of the alphabet that he had begun. They made obedience of more account than all the rest, preferring it not only to the manual work they were doing, but also to reading and prayer and recollection and all other works; and so they left them, not to be wanting in obedience even in the least point, as if they heard the voice of God. St. Benedict also puts this teaching in his rule, and from those authorities our Father drew it.

To give us to understand how pleasing to Him is this punctual obedience, whereby we leave the letter of the alphabet unfinished, our Lord has been pleased often to confirm it by miracles, as in the case of the monk who, when the bell rang to a duty of obedience when he was writing, left the letter of the alphabet that he had begun to form, and when he returned, found it finished, and the second half done in gold. To another monk the Child Jesus had appeared, very beautiful and resplendent, when they rang for vespers. He at once left and went to the call of obedience; when the duty was over, he returned to his cell and found the Child there, Who said to him: "Because thou didst go, thou hast found Me; if thou hadst not gone, I should have gone hence at once." Of another, Ruysbroeck relates that he found the Child Whom he had left, in the form of a most beautiful youth, Who said to him: "So much have I grown in thy soul by the punctuality of thy obedience." The devil, on the contrary, when he cannot prevent our obedience altogether, endeavors to make us unpunctual in obeying, so that he may have some part in it, and walk off with at least a little bit of the work between the time that the bell rings and you get up and go about it. He seeks to carry off the flower and beginning of our actions and levy toll on them; thus he tries to keep you in bed just a little after the bell has rung for you to get up, and that you should finish the letter begun when you were writing, and even sometimes the argument and clause, under plea of not forgetting it. But it should be our endeavor to give to God the whole work entirely, with the commencement and bloom thereof, which renders the fruit very pleasant, and not to give it when the bloom is off and the flower is fallen.

Our Father wishes more of us in regard of this exterior obedience. He wishes that we should in this way meet not only the sound of the bell and the voice of the superior, but also any sign and signification of his will. "Let all," he says, "lay themselves out for obedience, and make it their effort to excel therein, not only in things of obligation, but also in others where but a sign of the will of the superior is apparent, without any express command." Albertus Magnus, speaking of obedience, says: "The truly obedient man never waits to be told a thing; but what he knows or believes to be the mere wish of his superior, he fervently puts into execution as though it were a command." He gives as an example Christ our Lord and Master, Who took it for a precept and command to die for men, seeing that such was the will and good pleasure of His eternal Father.

Cassian tells of the ancient monks that their obedience was so great that they not only obeyed at the voice of the superior, but at any sign whatever of his will, so that they seemed in some sort to divine and prognosticate the will of the superior, doing what he wanted before he commanded them. That is what St. Bernard says, that the thoroughly obedient man anticipates and forestalls the superior who commands him—*praecipit praecipientem*—doing what the superior wants before he orders it.

Our Father used to say that there were three sorts of obedience. One is when they command me in virtue of obedience, and that is good; the second is when they direct me to do this or that, and that is better, because it shows greater subjection and promptitude of will to do a thing on a simple direction than to wait for an order in virtue of holy obedience; the third sort of obedience is when I do this or that upon becoming aware of some sign of the superior's will, though he does not command or direct me expressly. This obedience, he says, is much more perfect and agreeable to God. There in the world the servant and attendant who at half a sign understands the will of his master, and sets to work to put it in execution, pleases and satisfies his master more than another who has to be told everything expressly. *Acceptable to the king is an intelligent servant* (Prov. xiv. 35). So it is also here in obedience. He who meets the occasion at once upon any signification of the will of the superior is the better and more perfect subject, and the more agreeable and satisfactory to superiors and to God. And this is the teaching of St. Thomas, who, speaking of obedience, says that, when anywise one comes to understand the will of the superior, that is a tacit precept and command, and then is better seen the readiness of the subject to obey. So we should endeavor to stretch our obedience to this point. For it happens sometimes, and even often, that the superior does not like to order the thing expressly, in order to act with great gentleness and not mortify the subject, or for not knowing how he will take the order; in that case, when there is no doubt of the will of the superior, it would be a great fault not to meet him half way, and offer oneself for the obedience.

God was seeking someone to send to Jerusalem to preach, and said in the hearing of Isaias: *Whom shall I send, and who will go on this mission?* (Isaias vi. 8). Isaias understood that He meant it for an invitation to him, and at once offered himself: *Lo, here I am, send me.* So it is right that we should take the invitation to ourselves and offer ourselves, when there is any word or sign making the superior's will clear.

We might quote many examples teaching us the readiness and smartness which we should show in obedience. Among them a very good one is what Holy Scripture relates of the Prophet Samuel, when he was a youth serving in the Temple as sacristan to the priest Heli. One night he was sleeping in the Temple, and God called him in one word, *Samuel, Samuel,* to reveal to him the chastisement which He intended to inflict on Heli. Samuel awoke at the word and, as he did not understand such speech, since hitherto the Lord had not spoken to him nor revealed anything to him, he thought that his priest Heli was calling him, so he rose quickly and went at a run to him: *Here I am, for thou hast called me.* Heli told him he had not called him: *I did not call thee, my son; go back and sleep.* He went back to bed and to sleep, and God called him a second time; he awoke and thought that Heli was calling him, for he could not think of anyone else who could be calling; so he rose and ran to him, as the first time. Heli thought he must be dreaming, and told him again to go to bed. He went back to bed and to sleep. God called him a third time; he awoke, and went straight to his superior, thinking that he had called him: *Here I am, sir, since thou hast called me.* Then Heli realized that it must be God calling him, to reveal him something, and said to him: "Go back, child, and sleep; and if again thou hear them calling thee, remain where thou art, and say: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth* (I Kings iii. 9). He went back to bed and to sleep, and God called him again, *Samuel, Samuel.* He awoke at the voice, and, as he was instructed, said: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* Then God spoke and revealed to him what He wished. Here let us consider the obedience and great readiness of Samuel, in that, though he found himself balked the first and second time, and Heli himself had told him that he was not calling him, and that he should go back to sleep, and he could not think of anyone else who could possibly be calling him, nevertheless he got up again a second and third time, and went to Heli to see what his commands were. This is the readiness and alacrity with which we should meet and obey our superiors.

That is also a good example which Holy Writ brings to our consideration, of Abraham's prompt obedience when God bade him sacrifice his only son Isaac. We are told that he did not wait for the morrow, but at once *rising at night* (Gen. xxii. 3), before the break of day, on receiving the command, he put himself on the way, ready to execute the order, and an order so difficult, Holy Writ further observes, that he left his servants at the foot of the mountain and would not take them with him, that there might be no one who could possibly hinder his carrying out the obedience.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Second Degree of Obedience

THE second degree of obedience consists in conforming our will to that of the superior, and having no other will, neither choosing nor refusing except what the superior wills or wills not. It is the tritest and commonest saying that we have in religious life; it is on this presupposition that we all enter that state. It is the first principle and foundation. It is told to all, and put before everyone who has a mind to enter religion: "See, now, you do not come here to do your own will, but another's." And all say, "I know that already." As we say it, and as it was said to us, so it is in truth. This is being a religious and living under obedience. St. John Climacus says: "Obedience is the tomb of self-will, and the awakener of humility. In entering religion we have to take account that we are burying our own will, and that henceforth we must in all things follow that of the superior."

Our Father adds that we must be so disposed, even though they command us things difficult and repugnant to sense. It is rather for these things particularly that we should show much readiness, when we are ordered to do them, for in them true obedience is shown, as the saints commonly observe. When they order us what we like and what is conformable to our inclination and will, obedience cannot be well seen, for haply it is our own taste and inclination that carries us thereto rather than the will of God and obedience. But when the thing ordered is difficult, and repugnant to our sensuality and our flesh, and we embrace it with great alacrity, then obedience is very visible; we are there quite sure and satisfied that we are not seeking ourselves, but purely God and obedience. Hence that is an excellent praiseworthy practice that we see in some religious, who, when they are ordered to take up offices and ministries for which they have great taste, are suspicious of themselves and feel a holy pain and anxiety, saying: "I don't know whether I am gaining any merit by this, for methinks I am doing it of my own will," and they lay their anxiety before their superior once or twice. Contrariwise, when they are ordered something for which they feel no inclination, but rather difficulty and repugnance, then they are much consoled, thinking that therein they may well be satisfied that they are not doing their own will, nor seeking themselves, but God alone. This is a very good and safe way of proceeding.

St. Gregory says: "When they order us to do high and honorable things, there ought to be nothing of our own in the performance, but we should take such functions up purely because they are commanded us and because such is the will of God. But when difficult, lowly, and humble work is enjoined us, there ought to be something of our own there, because to such things we should endeavor to bend our inclinations and likings, and take them up with much promptitude and good will"—*Debet obedientia in adversis ex* *suo aliquid habere, et in prosperis ex suo aliquid omnino non habere.* He who shall act in this way will have good grounds for believing and being satisfied that in other things also, commanded him by obedience, even though they are to his liking, he is doing the will of God and not his own. But he who does not obey with alacrity and good will in lowly, humiliating, and laborious offices, causing him sensible difficulty and repugnance, may well fear that in other things also that he does that are to his taste and inclination, he is not doing the will of God either, but his own. This is one of the signs whereby we may know when we are seeking ourselves in what we do, and when we seek purely the will of God.

Hence it follows that he is no obedient man whose desire and aim it is to get the superior to order him what is to his taste and to fall in with his will, and is ready to do that, but unready for other things. Our Father says very well: "It is a great self-deceit, and a mark of an understanding blinded by self-love, to think that obedience is being kept when the subject contrives to bring the superior over to what he himself wants." And he quotes St. Bernard's saying: "Whoever openly or by stealth gets his spiritual father to order what he himself wishes, deceives and flatters himself idly if he reckons on his obedience and plumes himself thereon, for it is not he that obeys the superior, but the superior that obeys him; nor does he do the superior's will, but the superior does his." This point is commonly insisted on and well known; still, that is no reason for passing it lightly over, since it is one of the most important and chief points that there are in this matter, and one of the things that religious have most to dread. Be very much afraid of the superior's putting upon you any office, ministry, or occupation simply because you desired and tried for it, and showed an ill countenance at something else that he hinted to you, and would rather you had done. Perhaps you will think afterwards that you have done wonders, and are laden with good works, because you have worked hard; and you will find that you have been befooled and void of all merit before God because you have done your own will, and not that of God. He may answer you in the words of Isaias (lvii. 1-3): *Why have we fasted, labored, and wearied ourselves so much, and all in vain?* Do you know why? Because you did your own will therein.

This passage of Isaias is quoted by St. Bernard to this effect, and he adds: "A great evil is self-will, since it makes your good works not to be good in you"—*Grande malum propria voluntas, qua fit ut bona tua tibi bona non sint.* In another place he further enlarges on this topic. Referring to the occasion when Christ our Redeemer appeared to St. Paul, and threw him from his horse and converted him, and scales fell from the eyes of his soul, and with the light that he received from heaven he said: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6), St. Bernard says: "The sign of a perfect conversion, the sign of a man's having renounced the world in good earnest and determined to follow Christ, is when he comes to say with the Apostle: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* A short speech, but compendious and pregnant with meaning, lively, to the point, and worthy of all consideration. Oh, how few there are at this day who attain to this perfection of obedience—that is, who have so far given up their own will that they never seek or claim or desire to have their own way in anything, only God's way, saying ever with the Apostle: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* and with the Royal Prophet: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready* (Psalm lvi. 8), it is disposed and prepared to do Thy will. Oh, the pity of it! We find today many more imitators of that blind man in the Gospel than of the new-made Apostle. *Heu plures habemus evangelici illius caeci quam novi Apostoli imitatores.* The Savior of the world asked that blind man: *What wouldst thou have me do for Thee?* (Mark x. 51). Oh, how great is Thy mercy, O Lord; how kind Thou art to us! How great Thy loving-kindness in our regard! When was it ever the usage for the master to inquire the will of the servant that he might do it? It is quite clear that that man was blind, since he did not consider, did not cry out in amazement at such a question from the mouth of Christ, even as the Apostle Peter did when Christ offered to wash his feet (John xiii. 6), and St. John when he saw Him coming for baptism (Matt. iii. 14). If he had not been blind, he should have cried out: 'Never, please God! It is for Thee, O Lord, to tell me what Thou wouldst have me do, since so it is fitting that I should do Thy will, and not Thou mine'—*Vere caecus ille, quia non consideravit, non expavit, non exclamavit: Absit hoc, Domine; tu magis dic quid me facere velis; sic enim decet, sic omnino dignum est, non meam a te, sed a me tuam quaeri et fieri voluntatem.* In this way nowadays there are many religious who have to be asked: *What wouldst thou have me do with thee?"* Thus far St. Bernard. The superior has to put on his thinking-cap and consider: "What would So-and-So like? What will he take to?" whereas it ought to be the other way about; subjects should come inquiring the will of the superior and wanting to know his wishes, to act accordingly, since it is for that that they came into religion, and not for the superior to come over to their will and order what they like, for that is neither obedience nor religion.

CHAPTER V

Of the Third Degree of Obedience

THE third degree of obedience consists in conforming our understanding and judgment to the judgment and understanding of the superior, having not only one will with him, but also one opinion with his opinion, judging that what he orders is well ordered, subjecting our judgment to his, and taking his for the rule of ours. To understand the necessity of this degree of obedience, that were enough which we said at the outset, that without it obedience will never be perfect nor entire. The saints say that obedience is a most perfect holocaust, in which the whole man, without any division of himself or any reservation of anything for himself, offers himself to his Creator and Lord in the fire of charity by the hands of his ministers. That was the difference in the Old Law between a holocaust and other sacrifices, that in other sacrifices part was burned in honor of God and part was kept back for the support of the priests and ministers of the Temple; but the holocaust was wholly consumed in the fire—nothing of it was reserved or kept back. If, then, you do not obey with the understanding, there will be then no holocaust, no entire and perfect obedience, since you fail to offer the chiefest and noblest part of your being, your understanding and judgment. So our Father used to say that those who obeyed with the will only, and not with the judgment, had only one foot in religion.

The blessed St. Bernard explains what and how this obedience of the understanding should be, by following up the history of the conversion of St. Paul and applying it hereto. When St. Paul, bewildered at the light from heaven, was converted and said: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* the Lord answered: *Go into the city, and there they will tell thee what thou art to do* (Acts ix. 7). On this plan and to this purpose it was that you entered religion. It was not without a high and divine purpose that God put fear and alarm about your salvation into you, and gave you a great desire to serve His Majesty, and to that end inspired you to enter this city, this school of virtue. Here they will tell you what you are to do, and what God requires of you. Going on with the story, we are told how, when St. Paul came into the city, though his eyes were open, he saw nothing, but was carried and led by others. That is the pattern and model of the obedience which a religious should observe. The perfection of it consists in this, that, though your eyes are open, you do not see or judge of anything, but let yourself be carried and guided by your superiors, putting yourself entirely in their hands. Take care not to open your eyes to your cost, as Adam opened his.

Holy Writ says of our first parents that, after they had sinned, their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked and were greatly ashamed of themselves (Gen. iii. 7). But how? Before their sin were they not naked as well, and had their eyes open? Clearly so, for God did not create them blind; but they did not come to see that they were naked, and did not dwell on the fact, because they were then living in the holy simplicity and purity of original justice, as it were, angels on earth. Now, this holy simplicity and perfection, which they lost by their disobedience, we ought to try and copy by our obedience in this paradise of religion. We should not have our eyes open to see other people's faults; and though another openly displays his fault and nakedness, we should not cast our eyes on it, nor dwell on it, and much more so in things that touch upon obedience. St. John Climacus, speaking of the care and diligence to be observed in this particular, says that, if thoughts and judgments contrary to obedience come into our mind, we should behave as when there come thoughts of blasphemy against God and against the faith, or foul and impure thoughts; we should give them no place nor entry in any way, but rather take from thence an occasion of greater shame and self-abasement.

In a letter of St. Jerome to a monk, instructing him how to behave in religion, one of the things that he strongly enjoins is this: "See that you never come to pass judgment on the commands and ordinances of superiors, asking why they have ordered this or that and whether it would not have been better to have put the thing in some other way than this, for that is no concern of the subject, but of the superior." St. Basil, exhorting to the same, says: "Even there in the world, when anyone wants to learn a mechanical art in order to gain a livelihood, we see that he apprentices himself to a master, watches steadily his hands, and obeys him in all that he tells him, without contradiction or passing judgment on anything or asking the reason of the order; and in that way he comes out a skilled artisan." We read of Pythagoras that, when he had said a thing, he bade his disciples ask no further questions, but keep to it inviolably, so that on being told, "He said it," there was an end of the matter. How much more is it to be expected that we should do so, dealing with one who is greater than Pythagoras, inasmuch as he stands in place of Christ our Lord; and when we see a thing to be commanded by obedience, no more should be needed to make us at once submit our judgment and believe that to be the proper thing to do.

Eusebius of Caesarea relates that the Lacedemonians had a law that none of the young men who were new to government functions should dare to dispute whether the laws were good or bad, nor look for flaws in them, but they were to surrender their judgments, and regard the laws as coming from God. The fact that their elders and predecessors had given them was to be argument enough for them to convince them that they were quite just. And if there were any difficulty arising from change of circumstances and times, suggesting a change in the laws, it was arranged that this change should not be proposed in presence of the young men, but it was to be referred to the elders in office for them to see what was fit, and no occasion be given to the young to lose their respect and veneration for the laws, which they reckoned would be a great misfortune for the commonwealth. Now, if those Gentile philosophers wished, and thought it so necessary, that such respect should be paid to the laws given by their ancestors, much more reason must there be for us Christians and religious to pay this reverence and respect to the ordinances and commands of our spiritual prelates, founded as they are not only on natural reason, as were the ordinances of those philosophers, but on the light of faith and the grace of the Gospel.

Our Father, in his marvelous "Letter on Obedience," shows very well that, away from this obedience of the judgment, it is impossible for the obedience of will and execution to be what it should be, and sets down many losses and inconveniences that follow from the want of this obedience; to which letter I refer the reader as the textbook of all that can be said on this matter.

CHAPTER VI

Of Blind Obedience

OUR holy Father Ignatius used to say that, as in the Church Militant God our Lord has opened two roads for men to be able to attain to salvation, the one common, which is the observance of the commandments; the other which adds the evangelical counsels, proper to religious, so in religion itself there are two sorts of obedience, the one imperfect and common, the other perfect and complete, in which is displayed the power of obedience and the perfect virtue of a religious man. Imperfect obedience, he said, has eyes, but to its own hurt; perfect obedience is blind, but in that blindness wisdom lies. The one forms its own judgment on what is commanded; the other does not. The former inclines more to one side than to the other; the latter neither to one side nor the other—it is always level, like the beam of a balance, equally disposed and prepared for all orders to be given. The former obedience obeys with the hand, and resists with the heart, and so deserves not the name of obedience; the latter does what is ordered, and subjects its judgment and will to the will and judgment of the superior, taking for granted all that is ordained by superiors without seeking reasons why it should obey, nor acting on the reasons that occur to that effect, but obeying rather on this sole consideration that such is obedience. This is blind obedience, so much practised and commended by the saints and masters of spiritual life. It is not called blind in the sense that we are to obey in anything and everything commanded us, sin or no sin, which would be a serious error—and so is expressly declared by our Father in his Constitutions—but it is called blind because in all things in which there is seen no sin we are to obey simply and flatly, without inquiring or seeking reasons for the command, presupposing that what is ordered is holy and according to the divine will, and being satisfied with this reason alone, that such is obedience and so the superior commands.

So Cassian calls this "obedience without discussion and without examination," because you are not to discuss, or ask questions, or want to know the reason why, but do simply what you are told. St. John Climacus says: "Obedience is action without examination and without discussion, a voluntary death, a life without curiosity, a resignation of one's own will and discretion, yet not without a high measure of discretion." St. Basil, commenting on Christ our Redeemer's commendation to St. Peter, and in him to all superiors, *Feed my sheep,* says that, as sheep obey their shepherd and go the way that he wishes, so the religious must obey his superior and go the way he wishes, with much plainness and simplicity, like a good sheep, without inquiring into or scrutinizing the order. St. Bernard says: "Perfect obedience, especially in a beginner, is void of discernment"—*Perfecta obedientia est, maxime in incipiente, indiscreta.* "Do you know," he says, "what I call 'void of discernment'? On your part it should be void of discernment. That is, you should not seek to discern or examine the reason why and wherefore the command is given; shut your eyes, and obey with humility and confidence, without further concern as to why you are ordered to do it. A thing for which our first parents paid heavily was their seeking to investigate and examine the motive of the command laid upon them. By that avenue the devil entered in and overthrew them; that was the beginning of all their woe and ours. He said to them: *Why hath God bidden you not to eat of all the trees in paradise?* Eve replied: *Lest perchance we die* (Gen. iii. 1, 4). God had said definitely that by eating of that tree they would die. *In whatever day thou shalt eat thereof thou shalt die;* and Eve throws doubt upon it, thinking that God's sentence would prove not to be absolute, but only a threat, thus manifestly laying herself open to be deceived, as indeed she was. The devil said to her: "Go to, you shall not die; but rather, if you eat of this tree, you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil; that is why God has commanded you not to eat of it, that you might not come to know as much as He knows." Eve let herself be carried away with the desire to mount up and be more than she was, so she ate and made Adam eat. They set about inquiring and examining into the reason of that command, and thereby they came to eat and disobey, and be cast out of Paradise. They died on the spot a spiritual death because they sinned mortally, and a bodily death afterwards. And because the devil succeeded so well here, and threw such a good throw, he assails us oftentimes in the same way. And of this the Apostle St. Paul warns us beforehand, saying: *I fear lest the old serpent may deceive you, as he deceived Eve, and make you fall from your holy simplicity* (II Cor. xi. 3). Beware of that serpent; take him not by the head, for he will bite you. Take hold of the thing commanded you by the first grip you can get of it, executing it without inquiry or examination as to the why and wherefore, and in this way obedience will be to you the rule and standard of what you have to do.

Especially at the beginning, says St. Bernard, it is very important to accustom oneself to obey in this manner, blindly and without any questioning; because "it is impossible, morally speaking, for him to stay in religion who from the outset puts up for being very wide-awake and knowing the reason of everything"—*Novitium prudentem, incipientem sapientem, in cella diu posse consistere, in congregatione durare, impossibile est.* Then what is one to do? How is one to behave? You have to make yourself a fool and a stupid to be wise. *Stultus fiat ut sit sapiens* (I Cor. iii. 18). "This should be all your discernment, in matters of obedience to have no discernment nor judgment; for this discerning and looking at reasons, why and wherefore, is the office of the superior, not of the good subject; his it is to embrace with much simplicity, humility, and confidence whatever the superior ordains. Discretion should be in the superior, execution in the subject"—*Et haec omnis sit eius discretio, ut in hoc nulla sit ei discretio; et haec omnis sapientia eius sit, ut in hac parte nulla ei sit. Discretio superioris est, subditorum est obedire* (St. Bernard).

The glorious Apostle St. Paul makes a good reflection to this effect on the blind obedience of the patriarch Abraham in sacrificing his son Isaac (Rom. iv. 18-22). God had promised him to multiply his generation as the stars of heaven and as the sands on the seashore, and to make him father of many nations (Gen. xv. 4; xvii. 4); and he had only this son Isaac in whom this promise could be accomplished; nor had he any hope of more sons, because he was old and his wife also; and even if he had, it was on this same Isaac that God had made the promise: *In Isaac shall thy seed be called* (Gen. xxi. 12). None the less, God bade him sacrifice this only, this so cherished, son Isaac. He hesitated not over the obedience, and as little did he hesitate in his faith of the fulfilment of the promise that God had made him; but in blind obedience he started to put God's command in execution, and had already lifted up his knife to cut Isaac's throat. *Against natural hope he kept his hope that he could be father of many nations* (Rom. iv. 18). Supernatural hope overcame natural distrust, arising from what his eyes saw; he saw that by sacrificing him he was left without a son, and, nevertheless, he doubted not of the promise of God, but remained in full assurance that it must be accomplished either by raising his son from the dead afterwards, or in some other way that he did not understand or know. This obedience pleased God so much that He made on the spot the promise that Christ should be born of him, and in that way his generation should be multiplied as the stars of heaven. "By Myself have I sworn that because thou hast done this deed, and for love of Me hast not spared thine only son, I will bless thee and multiply thy posterity as the stars of heaven and as the sands that are on the seashore; thy posterity shall hold the gates of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice" (Gen. xxii. 16-18). St. Jerome says: "See how pleasing to God was Abraham's blind obedience, since He gives it such a reward and recompense. For one son that he was ready to sacrifice to God, God bade him count the stars of heaven; and so He said that He would multiply his posterity"—*Cum unico filio non parcit in terris, stellas pro filiis enumerare iubetur in coelis.* Hence those ancient Fathers came to set so much value on blind obedience, and so much to practise it and exercise others in it. We have books full of instances of this, many of them confirmed by miracles, to give us to understand how pleasing to God this manner of obedience is.

Our Father, following this common doctrine of the saints, illustrates it by two very proper and profitable comparisons. "Let everyone," he says, "of those who live under obedience make up his mind that he is to let himself be carried and ruled by Divine Providence through his superior as though he were a dead body, which lets itself be carried where you will and treated as you like." St. Francis used to use this comparison, and repeated it many times. *We are dead to the world and to the things of the world* (Col. iii. 3). Being a religious means being dead to the world; and, therefore, they call entry into religion "a civil death," since we are thereby made as dead men. The mark of a man's being dead is his not seeing, not answering, not feeling, not complaining; we, then, have no eyes to see, no opinion to pass upon what belongs to the superior; we have no "answering back," no replies to make upon what obedience enjoins; we do not complain, we do not resent our being given orders that are not to our taste. For the dead body, the worst that the house affords is sought out and brought, the oldest linen to clothe and lay it out; so the religious should seek the oldest and most cast-away clothing. Let each one persuade himself that the worst things in the house will be given him in point of dress, food and lodging, and everything else; and if he does not accept this, but resents it, he is not dead nor mortified.

Our Father further says that we should let ourselves be carried and guided by Divine Providence by means of the superior like the staff or stick of an old man, that serves him who holds it in his hand wherever and for whatsoever purpose he wills to make use of it. As the stick goes where it is taken, and settles down where they put it, and has no movement of its own, but only that which the user of it gives it, so the religious should have no "proper motion" of his own, but let himself be guided and governed by his superior. Where they carry him, there he should go; where they set him down, there he should halt, now in the mud, now on the dry ground, now on high, now in a lowly place, without any resistance or contradiction whatever. If the stick that should be to you an aid and comfort in walking should resist you, and refuse to set itself down where you wanted to put it, but chose some other situation, it would be a nuisance and an obstacle instead of an aid, and you would fling it away. In like manner, when the superior wishes to make use of you and put you in such a place, in such an office and occupation, if you resist the superior's hand and set up a movement contrary to his in deed, will, or judgment, then instead of helping you will be in the way. You will be a burden and afford your superiors matter of reflection; they will want to get rid of you, and throw you over and discharge you somewhere else; and so they will go playing battledore and shuttlecock with you, from house to house, because you are not a good staff, and they cannot make use and avail themselves of you as they wish. A staff used for sport and recreation is a thing that the owner can take in hand, do with it what he likes, and play with it as he wills. Such should be the religious. It should be a pleasure to take you in hand and command you, and for the superior to do with you what he likes and glory with the centurion: *I have under me soldiers; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to that other, Come, and he cometh; and to another, Do this, and he doth it* (Matt. viii. 9).

St. Basil brings another good comparison to this purpose. As a workman employed on a building or any other construction uses his tools at his will, nor ever was there tool that did not readily obey him, to serve him as he wished, so the religious must aim at being a useful instrument in his order, that the superior may make use of him as he thinks fit for the spiritual building, without his offering any sort of resistance to the use they wish to put him to. Further, as the tool does not choose the work for which it is to serve and be useful, so neither must the religious choose, but leave all to the will and judgment of the workman, that is, his superior. Further still, to go on with the comparison, as the tool does not stir in the absence of the workman, nor has any proper motion of its own, but only that which he communicates to it, so the religious must not take in hand nor do any business but by the judgment and order of his superior. Not even in the least things must the religious be his own master, not for an instant—*ne ad punctum quidem temporis;* but always and in all things he must be moved and guided by the superior. This is the form and style of obedience that we have to keep to in religion.

I remember what a very grave father [Anthony Araoz] used to say—and he had been a long time superior in the Society—that he had spent fifteen years in it, and had never found it necessary to give a reason for any order of obedience. He thought it an insult to the subject to give a reason for anything commanded him. They all lived in such simplicity and abandonment of self that no one set himself to argue about the things that the superior ordered; but as soon as they knew this, "It is an order of obedience," they submitted their judgment and concluded at once: "It is good, it is the better course; he will know the reason why." We should try to carry out this principle; and the senior men amongst us should be foremost and conspicuous in doing so, and not think that they have more license than others to criticize and examine the obediences given and the things ordained by superiors. We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that, when he was General of the Society, he said time after time that, if the pope ordered him to start from the port of Ostia, which is near Rome, going on board the first vessel he found, though it were without mast, without rudder, without sail, without oars, and without other things necessary for navigation or sustenance, and to traverse the sea, he would do so and obey, not only in peace, but in contentment and joy of heart. And when a nobleman, hearing this, wondered and said: "And what prudence would there be in that?" he replied: "Prudence, sir, must not be asked so much of him who obeys and executes as of him who commands and ordains."

CHAPTER VII

Of the Obedience Necessary in Spiritual Things

IT is not only in things that seem to fall in well with flesh and blood that we must subject and surrender our judgment and reason; the same is equally necessary in things contrary to flesh and blood, and in themselves quite spiritual and holy. Let no one imagine that in these matters he is licensed to depart from the will and judgment of the superior. Rather it is just here that obedience of the judgment is more necessary, since from the exalted nature of the spiritual world the danger of a fall will be greater if we have no guide. So true is this that Cassian goes so far as to say that by no other vice does the devil drag away a monk and cast him headlong to perdition so readily as when he persuades him to despise the counsels of his elders, and trust to his own judgment, decision, and knowledge. Cassian, and St. John Climacus also, quotes many instances of monks, men of high spirituality and much given to prayer, and of a ripe old age, who, by trusting their own judgment and letting themselves be guided by that, came to be grievously deceived by the devil. The devil led one to the point of wanting to sacrifice his son, who was along with him in the monastery, under the idea that he should thereby be another Abraham. And he would have carried it into effect, too, had not the lad, seeing him sharpening his knife and preparing the cords to bind him, suspected what was in the wind and taken to his heels. Another he came to induce to throw himself down a precipice, persuading him that he would be a martyr and go straight to heaven.

Of the monk Heron, Cassian relates that he was so recollected and abstemious that even on the solemn day of Easter, when the other monks used to meet in the church, and afterwards take recreation together and have something extra to eat, he would not go out of his cell, nor break his abstinence so much as by the addition of a few herbs, but kept to his ordinary diet of bread and water, and that in very restricted measure. Hereby there was engendered in him a pride and assurance in his own judgment so great that the devil succeeded in persuading him that so holy a man as he could not incur any danger in this life, and might with perfect safety throw himself into a well, and be no worse for it, since the angels would receive him in their arms so that he should take no harm. Accordingly one night he did throw himself into a very deep well by way of proving his great virtue and merits; the result was that he hurt himself badly, and died of it two days after. On hearing the noise, the monks rushed to the spot and with great labor drew him out half-dead; and when he saw with his own eyes the hurt that he had received, and all the monks were trying to persuade him to repent, still no means could be found to get him to believe that he had been under an illusion, and so he made a miserable end. Hence we may learn the great danger there is in a man's trusting his own judgment and not yielding and subjecting it to the proper authority, whatever be his age in religion and proficiency in spirituality. Hence a saint went so far as to say, and very rightly, too, that he who trusts himself has no need of a devil to tempt him, seeing that he is his own devil. St. Chrysostom says that he who relies on his own judgment, however spiritual he may be, is in greater danger of going wrong than a mere beginner who lets himself be guided and governed by another; and likens the former to a great pilot, who, in reliance on his own skill, goes out onto the high seas in a boat without oars or sails; while the latter, being no seaman, trusts himself to an experienced mariner to make his passage in a well-appointed ship.

Let no one, then, be under the illusion that in spiritual things, as in fasts, prayers, penances, and mortifications, he may depart from obedience and guide himself by his own judgment. Cassian observes very well that it is one and the same kind of disobedience to break the superior's command in view of getting more work done as it would be to do the same to get more rest. And St. Basil says: "Go always on this principle, never to do a thing against the sentiment and will of your superior, since you are not your own, but belong to your order, and to act otherwise would be a theft and even a sacrilege, since it is taking away a thing that is already dedicated and offered to God." And he gives a good reason: "If the thing that you are doing is good and proper for you to do, why do you try to do it on the sly and without leave?"—*Hoc apud te constanter teneto, ut nihil omnino quidquam praeter illius sententiam facias; quidquid enim eo insciente facis, id furtum et sacrilegium est, tibique exitium non autem utilitatem ullam apportat, esto tu id bonum iudices. Nam si bonum est, quia ita clam fit et non in aperto?* Your superior is as desirous of your good and your improvement as you are; tell him the thing, and he will give you leave for it; if you do not do it in that way, not only will it profit you nothing, but you will be the worse for doing it. Let not that saying of Isaias apply to you: *Offer me no more sacrifice to no purpose* (i. 13). Why should you be anxious to labor in vain?

St. Gregory and St. Bernard say very well: A bad thing ought never to be ordered, and in a thing that is sinful it is clear that the subject ought not to obey; but when it comes to omitting a thing that is good because the superior forbids it, that ought to be done. The tree of Paradise that God forbade to our first parents was not bad, but good; but God forbade it them to increase their merit by that obedience, and show the subjection and acknowledgment that they owed to their Creator and Lord. So He commanded them not to eat of a thing that they might lawfully and holily have eaten if He had not forbidden it. So also our superiors at times forbid things which of themselves are good, because there and then they are not suitable to the subject, or to try his virtue and obedience. St. Basil adds here a thing specially worthy of remark; he says that true and perfect obedience in a subject is not so much seen in his leaving undone what is evil as in his leaving undone what in itself is good and holy, when ordered to leave it undone. And the reason thereof is that evil, though not forbidden, ought to be left undone because it is evil; but what is of itself good and holy is only left undone because of the command to let it alone; so the virtue of obedience shines out more conspicuously here, because but for that motive there would be no apparent reason for leaving the thing. Contrariwise again, when a man refuses to yield and submit in spiritual things, things of themselves good and holy, he shows more self-will and hardness of judgment; because in other things there is a certain pleasure and prompting of sensuality, making one fail in silence, modesty, temperance, and in other like things commanded; but in these things, that are contrary to our flesh and sensuality, there is no other pleasure than that of doing one's own will and following one's own judgment: it is all mere disobedience and hard-headedness. And so it comes to be that, just where a man thinks to please God more and do a work of supererogation and perfection, in that very work he rather shows his imperfection and makes himself more displeasing to God and superiors. God keep you from taking after the hard-mouthed horse, that neither feels nor obeys the bit, but goes where he likes, and when you least think it will throw you into a tight corner or over a precipice. A good horse should be soft-mouthed, taking the bit well and letting itself be carried along and governed; so the religious should be soft and yielding in his judgment, taking kindly to the bridle of obedience and letting himself be governed and carried readily in one direction and another.

In the Ecclesiastical History we have the story of that great servant of God, Simon Stylites, which means "Seated on a Pillar." He kept his position and was there doing penance on a pillar forty cubits [sixty feet] high, in winter suffering the severest cold, and the most intense heat in summer. So great was the penance and abstinence that he did there that some came to doubt whether he were a man at all; for it seemed a thing beyond all human endurance to be able to do and suffer the things that he did and suffered, especially when they saw that every year he fasted all Lent without eating or drinking anything all that time. Now, some holy Fathers of the Desert, seeing this strange and extraordinary way of life, assembled and held a meeting on the case, to see what was to be done; and the resolution they came to was to send him a message in this form: "What new and quite unprecedented manner of living is this? What means it that you have left the beaten track, trodden by the saints, and taken a road strange and new, that no one has gone before? The Fathers have assembled in congregation, and bid you come down from there at once, and follow the common way, trodden of old, which other monks follow, and give over those novelties." The messenger was instructed that, if on hearing this message he obeyed, and with promptitude and alacrity at once set about coming down from his pillar, they gave him leave to stay there and persevere in that manner of life, as new as it was rigorous, since his obedience was sufficient witness to that way's being of God; but if he resisted and would not come down and obey, the instructions were to force him to come down and leave the place at once. The messenger went with this message to the saint, and scarcely had he heard the mandate published that was brought him from the Fathers, when he put a foot forward to come down and obey. Then the messenger gave him the second part of the message that he brought, and said to him: "Be of good heart, my father, and persevere with every blessing upon you in that manner of life that you have taken up, since it is of God, and such is the opinion of those Fathers." A thing to be well noted here is, on the one hand, the saint's great obedience and submission of judgment in a thing so good, that he took to be of God; and on the other, how great account all those Fathers made of that obedience and submission, since they took it for a sufficient sign for judging that the Spirit of God was there; whereas his refusal to submit and subject himself at once to obedience they would have reckoned enough to hold him for no good man.

This is an excellent sign, and one commonly accepted as such by confessors and masters of spirit in many things, to know whether suggestions come from the good Spirit or not. This penitent has a great devotion to frequent Communion, and the confessor [prior to A.D. 1905] bids him not to communicate so often. This other desires to do great penance, many fasts, disciplines, and haircloths; another would fain sleep on the ground; another would curtail his sleep, and so forth. A very good thing, certainly, and very praiseworthy, is the desire of much penance and mortification; and of the two extremes that which is to be less suspected is an inclination to go rather against oneself than in favor of oneself, since the natural desire of self-love is ever to be feared and held in suspicion. But the best course in all these things, and one beyond all suspicion, is to give an account to the superior or the confessor of all that you do and all that you desire to do, and take the line that he marks out, since that will be the more pleasing to God and the more meritorious way.

And let this theological teaching be observed, for it is quite good and quite certain that, if a man has a working desire of doing certain penances or mortifications, and on giving an account of it to the superior the latter orders him to leave such things off, and he obeys in the matter, not only does he not lose the merit and gain of such works, but rather increases and doubles it; since on the one hand he gains the value and merit of those works and penances, for the working will that he had of doing them; and on the other hand he gains the value and merit of obedience by leaving them off for obedience. And sometimes this merit will be greater than the former for the greater abnegation and resignation of his will and judgment, in leaving what he so much desired, to obey and do the will of God as declared by his superior. This theological teaching was taught from heaven to the blessed St. Bridget. This saint had a strong inclination to severe penances; but the spiritual father who had the guidance of her took off at one time part of them in consideration for her health. She, though she obeyed, found it difficult, and was afraid of losing in her soul some degree of virtue. The most holy Virgin appeared to her and said to her: "Look here, daughter; if two men desire to keep a fasting day for devotion, and the one, who is his own master, actually does fast and receives his pay for fasting, while the other, being under obedience, does not fast because the superior tells him not, the latter gets double pay, one installment for his earnest and sincere desire to fast, and the other for renouncing his own will and obeying."

Even there in their heathendom, the heathen philosophers recognized and greatly esteemed this manner of obedience. Plutarch tells of Agesilaus, a most famous captain of the Lacedemonians, that, when he was deeply engaged in wars against the enemies of his country, and things were going very prosperously with him, and he was gaining great victories and winning great fights, there came to him one day a dispatch from the home government, bidding him retreat. And though he was in the midst of his glories, and had quite the upper hand of the enemy, he gave up at once and retreated. Plutarch says that he gained more honor and reputation by this act than by anything he had done in all the rest of his life. But let us leave foreign examples, since we have our own. Who will not be astonished at that great obedience of Father Francis Xavier, whom our blessed

Father Ignatius had so much reason to think highly of. He had in hand the conquest and conversion of a new world, when our Father summoned him to Rome, doing it with one single letter of the alphabet which he put at the end of his dispatch, added to his signature; it was *I,* which in Spanish stands for *Id* (Go). He was quite satisfied that he would quit that great enterprise and take the road to Rome from what was almost the extremity of the East. And doubtless he would have done so, but for the event that before the letter reached him he was already gone to enjoy the fruits of his labors in heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IT is told of the Abbot Nesteron that, the day he entered religion, he reckoned within himself: "I and the ass of the monastery are all one." From today onwards you have to be like the ass. All that they put on its back, it carries without saying a word of the why and wherefore. Be it much or little, it never in any way resists, nor has any opinion to the contrary. They give it blows; it shows no sense of wrong, nor ceases to work. A lowly animal he is, and a despised; on all hands he is held to be of no account, and with a little straw they reckon his services paid. The poor beast does not go where he likes, nor rest when he likes, nor do what he likes. In all and for all he obeys the man in charge; so also should the religious do. And as the animal does not eat for himself, nor rest for himself, but all is done for the better service of his master, so also the religious must not eat for himself, nor sleep, nor enjoy himself, nor take recreation on his own account, but all that is done to be better able to serve God and his order. *Make me, O Lord, as a beast of burden before Thee, that I may* *be ever with Thee* (Psalm lxxii. 23). So, then, make yourself as a beast of burden in religion, and in that way you will advance greatly therein.

Simon Metaphrastes relates, and Surius quotes it in the Life of St. Melania of Rome, an example which, he says, she used to repeat to her nuns. There came a youth to one of the great monks of old, saying that he wished to be his disciple. The old man, wishing to show what he should be if he wished to be a religious and a disciple of his, told him to flog a statue that was in the grounds, and give it blows and kicks. The youth did so. That done, the old man asked him if the statue had made any complaint or resistance. The youth said not. "Go back again, then," he said, "and beat it as before; and besides, give it much injurious language and insults." The youth having done this a second and a third time, the old man asked him again if the statue had resented it and shown itself offended. He answered No, because, after all, it was a statue without sense or speech. Then the old man said to him: "Now, if you can let me do to you as you have done to this statue, without resisting or contradicting or complaining, by all means come in to be my disciple; but if not, return home, since you are not made for a religious."

We read of St. Gertrude that she had an abbess of great holiness, but very unpleasant in her manner and apt to give sharp answers. The saint prayed to God to deliver her from this bad temper. The Lord answered: "Why would you have her freed from it, since thereby she takes occasion to keep herself in humility, that seeing that she falls into some impatience, she may humble herself and recognize her weakness? And, besides, what merit would you have in obeying if she were sweet-tempered? So I leave her this fault for your exercise, and that you may learn to obey."

Blosius relates something like this of the same saint, that one day, as she was praying for a defect of a certain person who was superior of a congregation, the Lord appeared to her and said to her: "I, for the abundance of My loving-kindness, gentleness, and divine love wherewith I have cherished this congregation, permit the existence of some defects even in those who govern it, that in that way the merit of the congregation may be increased; for there is much more virtue in subjecting oneself to another whose faults are known than to one whose actions seem perfect. I permit superiors to have some defects, and sometimes to forget themselves for the numerous occupations and variety of cares that they have, that they may humble themselves more. The merit of subjects grows and is augmented as well by the defects as by the virtues of those who govern them; and on the same principle the merit of those who govern and direct them grows, as is reasonable, as well by the progress and virtues as by the defects of their subjects." By these words of the Lord, St. Gertrude understood the exuberant loving-kindness of the Divine Wisdom, which so secretly arranges the salvation and cure of His servants, permitting faults in them to make them more perfect.

In the life of St. Anthony, St. Athanasius writes of those monks of old who gave themselves over to obedience, that they sought out severe and ill-tempered superiors who would never thank them for anything they did, but scold them, as Pacomius did his disciple Theodore to purify him if there were any dust of vainglory about him. And the harder and more peevish the superior was, the more obedient were they. One of the modes of religious life which those holy Fathers practised of old was for two disciples to be under the discipline and correction of one old Father, whom they served in all things as a slave serves his master. And as a master takes occasion at every step to scold and chastise his slave for not doing things to his liking, so also did those masters behave on the like occasion. And sometimes, through peevishness of temper, sometimes to exercise the young in virtue, they dealt out rough treatment to their disciples for as many as thirty years, as St. John Climacus says, proving them with various kinds of hard labor and harsh language.

Cassian tells of a wealthy lady of rank that lived in the city of Alexandria a very pious life. She had such a taste for suffering that, not content with bearing generously the pains and troubles of ordinary occurrence, she went out of her way to seek and provide for herself new occasions of trial, for her better exercise in virtue and mortification. With this desire she called upon the holy bishop Athanasius, and begged him to give her a widow, one of those supported by the Church, to keep and make comfortable in her house. The holy bishop praised her good desire, and bade them give her one, the best servant of God, and the kindliest and most peaceful-tempered that they had. She took her to her house, waited on her, and made her very comfortable. But when she saw the gentleness and gracious manners of this woman, who was full of thankfulness and praises for the services and kindnesses rendered her, she went back to the bishop with loud complaints that, whereas she had asked for a woman to serve for her own exercise and spiritual advancement, they had not given her one. The saint, not quite understanding what she wanted, thought that by oversight they had not given her any woman at all. He inquired into the matter, and found that they had given her the best of the lot; whereupon he understood the end and motive of her petitioning, and answered that he would see to it. So he bade them give her the most ill-natured and least virtuous of all they had—which character, the story says, was easier to find than the good one. Their choice fell on a woman, dour, ungracious, thankless, moody, passionate, wordy, and quarrelsome. She took her home, and began to serve her with great charity and humility as she had done the former, and even more. All that she got for this by way of return and gratitude was complaints, insults, curses, utter scorn; the woman declaring that she had brought her there not to entertain her, but to torment her; nay, sometimes she got so angry as not to keep her hands off her. The holy woman bore this in silence and endured it all, doubling and redoubling her attentions and efforts to make her comfortable. The more insults she received, the more services and kindnesses she rendered; and by these exercises she experienced great aid and profit to her soul. She went to thank the bishop for having gratified her desire by giving her such a teacher of patience, by whose teaching she profited continually. Occupied in these and other holy exercises she died in the Lord.

The Abbot Poemen used to relate what befell him when he was a novice in his dealings with the Abbot Joseph. Abbot Joseph had in his monastery a very fine fig tree, and used to send Poemen every morning to eat the fruit—an extraordinary thing to do, considering the abstinence the monks professed. One day that he gave him the order it was Friday, and he had not the heart to eat then, not to break the fast of that day, so universally received among all monks. Afterwards he was seized with remorse of conscience for not having obeyed, and went to tell the abbot. "Forgive me, father, the question I am about to ask: What is the reason why, professing such abstinence as we do, you have bidden me every day to eat those figs, especially on a day like this? I must tell you that I was much upset today, and so could not bring myself to eat; at the same time I am full of shame and remorse for not having obeyed you in this matter, seeing that you would never have ordered me such a thing without cause." To this the old man answered: "Son, the Fathers of the Desert of old did not in the beginning order their monks things so very rational and obvious, but things that on the face of them sometimes seemed absurd and mad, to test them and try whether they had submission of judgment and true resignation to the will of the superior; and when they saw that they did them without reply or hesitation, thenceforth they only ordered them things necessary and suitable."

In the Lives of the holy Fathers it is related that one of them saw one day four orders of the just in heaven. The first was of invalids, who in their weak health had practised patience and given thanks to God. The second, superior to the former, was of those who welcomed and gave hospitality to poor pilgrims, and served the sick, and, in short, practised works of charity. The third was of those who had left all things, and lived in the desert in great poverty and abstinence, occupied in prayer. The fourth order, superior to all the rest, was of those who, for love of Jesus Christ, lived in obedience, subject to the will of another in all things; and these he saw wearing chains and collars of gold, and in greater glory than the others. Surprised at this, he asked how it was that these had more glory than the rest, including the solitaries. It was answered him that it was because the monks in their solitude, and the others who were occupied in works of charity, fulfilled their own will in what they did, but the obedient not so; they sacrificed their own will to God, and as the will was the most valuable thing in man, so the sacrifice of it was of such merit in the sight of God; and the honor given them of those collars of gold was because they bowed their necks under the yoke of obedience.

This well agrees with what is related of the Abbot Pambo, that there came to visit him four monks of the Desert, all men of signal virtues. The first distinguished himself chiefly in fasts and great austerities that he practised; the second, in poverty; the third, in charity to his neighbor; the fourth had lived twenty years under obedience. The holy abbot preferred this last to all the other three, because such virtue as they had, they had kept of their own will; but this last one, entirely abandoning his will, had made himself the servant of another's. And saying this he added that those who did so, and persevered to the end in doing so, might truly be called martyrs.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Source and Origin of Judgments Contrary to Obedience, and the Means Whereby We May Help Ourselves against Them

THE root whence judgments and reasonings against the orders of obedience spring is our want of mortification. But someone will say: "That is as though we asked the origin of pride, and got the answer that it comes of want of humility." It is quite clear that, if my judgment were mortified, my obedience would be simple and I should have no judgments against it. But that is not what I say; what I say is, that from our not keeping our passions and appetites mortified, from our being great lovers of our own ease and the accomplishment of our own will, from our not being indifferent and resigned to all that may be commanded us—from thence it is that many reasons and judgments arise in our minds when anything is commanded us against our will and appetite. If you do not believe me, let anyone enter into himself, and see whence it is that judgments and answers back against obedience are wont commonly to present themselves, and he will find that it is when something is commanded to which he has a repugnance. When something is not granted which you want, when you are disappointed and touched to the quick on a sore point, then it is that apparent reasons against what is ordered come up in shoals; but when the order is something to your taste, something that you smack your lips over, then no judgments or reasons to the contrary present themselves; rather you think that what comes is just the thing, and is the most reasonable order in the world.

St. Jerome, on those words of the Prophet Osee (vii. 11): *Ephraim is as a misguided dove, that hath no heart,* asks why Ephraim is not compared to other birds, but to the dove. And he answers: Other birds do their best to defend their offspring, even at the risk of their lives; and when they see a kite or a hawk, a raven or a snake, approach their nest, they fly up and down, defending their young as best they can; and when they can do no more, they show the grief they feel by their plaintive laments. But the dove does not defend her offspring, nor utter any plaintive cries, nor show any feeling, when they are taken away, nor go after them to look for them; therefore Ephraim is compared to a dove. And for this Christ our Redeemer tells us to imitate the dove, so that, when they take away our little ones that we love and are fond of, we should be as the dove, offering no resistance or contradiction, nor complaining, nor showing any resentment thereat (Matt. x. 16). Therefore it is from our want of mortification, and the difficulty and repugnance that we feel over things contrary to our will, that these judgments arise. So the principal means that we can take on our part against this temptation is to be sure and mortify ourselves, and not have any will of our own, nor any desire of our own liking and convenience, but to be quite indifferent and resigned to all that the superior shall chose to make of us, and not care whether they order us this rather than that.

Therefore those ancient Fathers, as good masters of spirit, exercised their disciples greatly, commanding them things that seemed not to the purpose, to try their obedience and curb their will and judgment. And this purposeless procedure was much to the purpose; for it is much more important that you should mortify yourself, and that your will and judgment be curbed by being bent the other way about, than any advantage that could be gained by doing the thing in another fashion. Oftentimes the superior's mind is that this or the other advantage be forfeited for your gain and advancement; and so it is not loss but gain. And as those who break in wild colts make them sometimes gallop, now go slow, now right about, now in the midst of an evolution to wheel round the other way, now to stop suddenly in mid career, that they may get accustomed to obey the bit, and not follow their own impetuous motions, so good masters of spirit act. So we read that the great Anthony dealt with his disciple Paul; he would make him sew a garment and immediately go back and unsew it, and weave a basket and immediately unweave what he had woven. Others made their disciples draw water from a well, and empty it back at once into the same well. We read of the blessed St. Francis that he made his companion Friar Maseo spin round so many times in the middle of the road that he grew giddy and fell fainting to the ground. Others who sought entrance into his order he made plant lettuces or cabbages wrong way up, root upwards, to try their obedience and uproot from them all self-opinion, and not leave in them any token of private judgment or self-will. Would to God that this exercise were more in practise to this day; because if one gets accustomed to have what is well done undone, he will not feel it when they rebuke him for what is badly done.

But since this entire mortification and resignation requires great perfection, in the meantime, while we do not attain to it, we may aid ourselves by our very want of mortification, recognizing and putting all down to that. This will be a very good means to prevent the judgments and reasonings that occur against obedience from doing us any harm; for once you understand that it is the fault of your imperfection, you will make no account of it. A sick person who knows that he is ill, is quite aware that, though he feels thirsty, it is not proper for him to drink, and though the purgative draught is bitter, and the leech hurts him, that is just the thing for him; therefore he does not believe his appetite nor put any trust in it, but subjects himself to the doctor, following his prescription and taking that for the better thing. Thus we are sick, full of self-love and disorderly passions; like a sick man, we have no appetite but for what does us harm, and what is good and profitable shocks and disgusts us. Let us, then, use the expedient which the sick man uses who wishes to get better; let us have no belief in ourselves, but believe the superior, who has the care and direction of us, and take for certain what he commands and ordains, making no account of the judgments that occur to us, but holding them for a sick man's fancies. In this way not only will the judgments and reasonings that occur to you against obedience do you no harm, but you will gather fruit from them, and conform yourself more to obedience, because you will at once return upon yourself, saying: "As I am sick, what is good and to my advantage offends me; and I need no other sign to understand that this is what befits me and is the better thing than the fact of its offending me and difficulties' occurring against it, because I am sick and my taste is all awry."

This is a great remedy against all judgments that occur, not only against obedience, but also against our brethren, to turn them at once against yourself. "I am the blind man who goes astray, so that what is well done seems to me evil; what judgment have I got that I should seek to lay down the law for others?" And when the manners of your brother offend you, and his way of going on, you should throw the blame upon yourself. "I am the ill-mannered man, and therefore this and that offends me; the fault is in me, and not in the other man."

Against all temptations it is a great remedy to understand that it is a temptation; therefore, when the devil tempts us, he labors all he can that his temptation may not appear a temptation, but right reason, so that we may fall into it. As the hunter, when he sets a trap, always tries to make it appear not a trap, but a good offer of food, since nor beast nor bird would fall into it if they took it for a trap, so the devil acts. *Satan transforms himself into an angel of light* (II Cor. xi. 14), that we may take that to be light and brightness which is gloom and darkness. God deliver you from the temptation that appears not a temptation, but a reasonable course of action. When judgments of your own making get such a mastery over you as to impress you with the belief that you are not influenced by passion, nor under temptation, and that you do not speak from any personal motive, but because the case is clear and any man of sense will see it, then your temptation is great, and the remedy hard to apply. These temptations that come under the appearance of good are the gravest and most dangerous of temptations. When a barefaced temptation comes, you may help yourself by many means to overcome it; but when it is not known for a temptation, but is taken rather for a reasonable proposal, how shall we manage to throw it off? When it is not known for an enemy, but taken for a friend, how are we to guard against it? A great servant of God used to say that he was not afraid of the defects that he knew, but of those that he did not know, or made no account of, or excused.

But to come back to the point, I say that, when reasonings and judgments occur against obedience, it will be a great remedy to turn against ourselves and make up our minds that this is a weakness and want of mortification and a shortcoming of ours, and so take no notice of them. We have abundant reason for doing this, because it is the nature of our flesh and sensuality at once to invent and find many apparent reasons for what pleases and satisfies us, and many inconveniences attending on the contrary. We are so blinded by our self-love and passions as easily to believe and judge a thing to be quite the contrary of what it really is. Thus to a very thirsty man water seems to be the best and pleasantest and most delicious thing in the world, because he judges according to his present disposition. So to anyone laboring under any violent emotion, the disorderly affection that he has represents the object as something very different from what it really is, and makes him judge of it contrary to the truth. When a man knows himself not to be clear of earthly affections, and to have many lively passions, he should not easily trust his own judgment, but rather look upon it as a disorder and an enemy to be on his guard against.

Not content with not letting ourselves be carried away by these judgments, we should further endeavor to make our profit out of the temptation to our greater confusion and humiliation, saying: "What? Can I be so proud as to harbor judgments against my superior? Did I not enter religion to be at everybody's service? And shall I seek now to prefer myself to him who is my head, and superior of us all? I did not come to command, nor to rule and govern, but to obey and be commanded; I have no business to judge my guide, but he should judge me." This is a general remedy, very useful for gathering fruit from all temptations. From that very pride and vanity which assails us we should take occasion to humble ourselves the more. As the devil tries to convert the antidote into poison, getting us to take pride in our virtue and in the very act of humility that we do, so it should be ours to convert the poison into an antidote by humbling ourselves the more for the pride that comes over us. To think that pride should come over me, such a weak and imperfect creature as I am! To think that I should be vain of what I do badly, and wish to be regarded and esteemed on that account! There it clearly appears what I am. It is a wondrous countermine to the artifices of the devil, to contrive to make gain out of what he intended for our ruin. *Salvation from our enemies* (Luke i. 71).

There are many other considerations to aid us not to give credit to our own reasonings, nor take account of our own judgments, but always hold them in suspicion. The first is, because the wise commonly say that in all things it is true prudence not to trust one's own prudence; how much more will this hold good in our own affairs, where we are an interested party. It is clear, and it is a first principle in moral philosophy, that no one is a good judge in his own cause, because passion and self-love blind us. Thus we have no reason to trust our own judgment, but rather to follow the judgment of our superior, and persuade ourselves that whatsoever he decides is the best course.

A second consideration to aid us to this effect is that the subject sees sundry particular reasons that occur, while the superior sees them and many others, which the subject does not know nor can know. And though in view only of those particular reasons the course that suggests itself to you might possibly be the better, yet in view of all the reasons together, which the superior knows, it is not the better. And thus not only in the way of religious life and perfection, but also according to the law of prudence, it is a great piece of impertinence and pride to set oneself to judge and pass sentence on the order of the superior for one or two reasons which occur to you, reasons which the superior has examined repeatedly, while he has others which make it appropriate to do something else. St. Augustine draws a good comparison from the head, the upper part of man. The soul, he says, animates and gives life to our whole body, but in the head all the five senses stand out, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. In the other members there is only the sense of touch; and for that reason all the members are subject to the head, which is above them all as a higher power to guide and govern them. So in the superior, as in the head, all the five senses have their marked place, but in you, as a member, only one. You touch only one particular reason, while the superior touches them all; he hears, sees, and knows all that there is in each case; thus it is reasonable that the members be subject to the head. Even in the world they say that the fool knows more in his own house than the wise man in the house of a stranger; how much more will the wise man know more in his own house than the other in the house of a stranger! The Wise Man says: *Judge not against the judge, because* *he judgeth according to what is just* (Ecclus. viii. 17). See what an impertinence it is to seek to be judge of what you do not know what way it comes, nor whither it goes, nor can know, nor is it well that you should know.

A third consideration that will aid us to give up our own judgment and submit to that of the superior, is to reflect that the superior looks to the common good of the whole house and the whole order, while you, as an individual, look just in the direction of your own finger, and give ear to your own particular conveniences. Now the common and universal good is to be preferred to the particular. We see even that natural things cease to act according to their particular inclinations when it is for the common and universal good, as the water ceases to run down in the syphon, and at other times mounts up, that there may be no vacuum, for the perfection of the universe, as the philosophers say—*propter perfectionem universi.* Thus each individual must abate somewhat of his own convenience and inclination for the accomplishment of the common good, which is what the superior regards.

A fourth consideration that will also help us not to give credit to our own judgments is the experience that we have of ourselves. How many things have we believed, and taken to be right well assured, and affirmed them as certainties, and then we have found that we have been mistaken, and have changed our opinion and been ashamed afterwards of having believed as we did believe and judged as we did judge! If a man had deceived you twice or thrice, you would never trust him again; how, then, is it that you trust your own judgment, having been deceived by it so many times? This experience, which everyone has of his own ignorance and of his having been mistaken on other occasions, is commonly the reason why in things on which the youngest easily make up their minds, the oldest proceed with great reserve and consideration, as being men of ripe judgment, prudent and experienced.

CHAPTER X

An Explanation of the Three Reasons That the Apostle St. Paul Gives for Obedience

OBEY your superiors and be subject to them, for they watch with care as having to give an account to God for your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with sighs, for this is not expedient for you either (Heb. xiii. 17). The Apostle St. Paul here gives us three reasons for obeying our superiors, which, being reasons of the Holy Ghost, spoken by the mouth of the Apostle, cannot fail to be very good and profitable. The first is: Obey your superiors and do all that they bid you, always understanding that there be no sin in the command, as has been explained, and upon this supposition we proceed always in all that we shall say. Be subject to them because they watch as having to give an account to God for your souls. One of the greatest comforts and consolations that we have in religion is this, that we are safe in doing what obedience commands. The superior it is that may be wrong in commanding this or that, but you are certain that you are not wrong in doing what is commanded, for the only account that God will ask of you is if you have done what they commanded you, and with that your account will be sufficiently discharged before God. It is not for you to render account whether the thing commanded was a good thing or whether something else would have been better; that does not belong to you, nor will God lay it to your account, but to the account of the superior. When you act under obedience God takes it off your books, and puts it on the books of the superior. So says St. Jerome: "What a grand liberty and security is that of obedience, under which we can scarcely sin"—*O summa libertas, qua obtenta vix possit homo peccare!* Obedience, as he says, renders us in some sort impeccable.

Especially for those who like ourselves are occupied in ministering to our neighbor, it is a great comfort to be satisfied that one is doing the will of God. If we were there in the world, however good we might be and however desirous of doing the will of God, we should always be between two fires, not knowing whether we should serve God better by attending to our neighbor or by minding ourselves alone. But here in religion we are free from these difficulties, because it is our institute to occupy ourselves in helping our neighbor, and for that God called us to the Society, and it is He that sets us to that work, so we are certain that we are pleasing His Majesty therein. There outside the walls of religion a man might not dare to hear confessions; or, if he did dare, it might be with fear whether he were pleasing God therein or not, or whether he were in the way of losing his soul thereby or not, but now he rests secure and is certain that he is serving God thereby. You have not set yourself up to be a confessor or to be a preacher or to be a superior, whether you be fitted for the post or not. The superiors who put you in it will render an account to God, for they watch as having to render an account to God for your souls.

St. John Climacus agrees very well with this. Treating of obedience, among other epithets that he applies to it he says that obedience is an excuse before God. If they ask me, "Why did you do that?" I answer, "Lord, because they told me." That is the answer I will give to God and therewith I shall be quite excused in His sight. It is, he says, a safe voyage, a journey that you may make sleeping. A man on shipboard settles down and sleeps, and yet makes his way; his is no care about the course to be taken. The captain looks to that. So the religious, living under obedience, composes himself to sleep—that is to say, he has no trouble or care about what he is to do, but goes his way to heaven and perfection. Superiors see to that; they are the captains and masters of the ship. It is no small thing, it is a great thing, to traverse the abyss of this world in the arms and on the shoulders of other people. Now this is the blessing which God has given to the religious who lives under obedience, that all his burden is thrown on the shoulders of his superior, and he lives at ease and without care whether this be better or that.

This is one of the things that greatly move virtuous folk to live under obedience and enter religion—to be rid of the endless perplexities and anxieties that they have there in the world, and be sure of serving and pleasing God. For, though the things they choose for their occupation be good, they do not know whether it be given to them to busy themselves with them, since it is not within all men's compass to do all that is good, especially when it exceeds our strength, as is the work of teaching or having charge of others. So a very grave doctor says that he would rather pick up straws from the ground by obedience than engage in great things of his own will, for in the work done under obedience you are sure and safe of doing the will of God, but in the other not. And not only in ministries and occupations with our neighbors does obedience give us security and deliver us from many doubts and difficulties, but also in private matters that concern our own spiritual advancement. If I were there in the world and desired to serve God, I should be troubled and in doubt whether I eat too little or too much, sleep too much or too little, do too little or too much penance, make too little or too much meditation; but here in religion all these doubts are cleared away, for I eat what they give me, I sleep at the time appointed, I do the penance they assign me. All these things are here so well looked after and weighed by superiors that I am quite safe and sure that, in following the order of obedience, I am doing the will of God.

And not only in spiritual matters, but also in temporal, this is a life very restful and void of care. Like a passenger on board a well-victualed ship, a religious has no need to attend to his own necessities. The superior not only watches over our souls, but over our bodies also. Thus you need not trouble yourselves what you are to eat or what you are to wear, that so you may be more free and disengaged to employ all your energy in loving and serving God—a thing so desirable that Cassian relates of Abbot John how he had first lived thirty years in a monastic community and then thought fit to leave his monastery and choose a hermit's life, to give himself more to contemplation. And so he did, a thing that they could do in those days. In this eremitical and solitary life he lived twenty years more, with so many heavenly delights and in such high and continual contemplation that he used to forget his body, and his senses no longer did their office, and in the evening he did not remember whether he had eaten that day or not. Yet for all this high degree of contemplation, and though his life in solitude was such a success, he determined to abandon the state of solitude and return once more to the monastery, to live in community under obedience; and so he did. The reason that moved him was that, though in the monastery there was not so much of those ecstatic contemplations as in the desert, yet this, he said, was made up for in the monastery by that holy tranquillity and freedom from care which a religious enjoys in his deliverance from all solicitude and care as to the supply of his wants for tomorrow. And much more is it made up for by what we were saying of one's being sure of pleasing God in all that one does, and by the fact that for the time being one cannot do anything more pleasing to the Divine Majesty than what one is doing.

God has given to us who are in religion and live under obedience another Moses, such as He gave to the children of Israel, who goes up the mountain and declares to us the will of God. And so we can say what the children of Israel said when they had any doubt or difficulty: *Let us go to the seer* (I Kings ix. 9). Let us go to consult and ask him who sees. The prophet called him *the seer,* because he saw and understood from God His will and declared it to the people. Now this is the advantage that we have, that in all our doubts and difficulties we can say, *Let us go to the seer;* let us go to him whom God has given us for prophet, and put in His place to declare to us His will. Thus we enjoy that blessing or blessedness which the Prophet Baruch spoke of in the name of the people of God. *Blessed are we, O Israel, because the things that God requireth and are agreeable to him, he hath made manifest to us* (Bar. iv. 4). Happy and blessed are religious who understand and obey their superiors, that they may bear the burden of their office with cheerfulness and joy, and not go groaning under it.

The Apostle has compassion on superiors and pities them, seeing the burden that they bear. So he recommends us to be ready in obedience thereby to render their burden the lighter. Since the superior has labor enough, and bears a heavy burden on his shoulders in having to give an account to God of what he does and of what you do, do not pile more load upon him by making a difficulty of obeying, instead of letting yourself be governed. A great distress it is to a superior to have a subject so unmortified that he cannot do with him what he would like, and dares not order what he judges proper, but has to tread carefully and in fear, wondering whether he will take it well, whether he will answer back and raise difficulties about what he does not like, and how he shall put the thing to him that he may take it well and like the job. To give an order to such people is like commanding and moving a bad leg or arm when you have to do so; what trouble, what pain and annoyance it costs you! Why is that? Because the limb is out of order, and therefore is not easy to command, but very difficult. So great is the pain that you feel in your leg when you try to do anything with it, that you dare not go from here to there even on business of importance, and you rather let the affair lapse than suffer such pain. In the same way with a bad arm; you dare not raise your hand to your mouth to eat. A religious order is all one body, as St. Paul says of the Church (I Cor. xii. 12), and each of us is a member of that body. But if you are an infirm and unmortified member, you will give great trouble to your order and to your superior whenever it comes to making use of you and commanding you. Such is the pain that a superior suffers when he sees a subject do things with difficulty and with a bad grace, that, though the thing needs doing, and affairs and ministries are left on his hands to do, he often dares not issue the order for the great pain he feels in commanding a bad arm or leg.

This is an excellent consideration for those who fancy that it is a pleasant and enjoyable thing to be superior and to have spiritual children to order about. Of Rebecca, Holy Writ tells us that she had much desired to have children, and God gave her them; but when she felt the pains of childbirth, and the two children Jacob and Esau were struggling in her womb which was to come out first, she repented her and said: *If the getting of children must be in this manner with so much pain and labor, it were better not to have them* (Gen. xxv. 22). So it happens to superiors when they see one man do things with a bad grace; when another answers back, a third complains, and a fourth grumbles. Then the superior feels the throes of his office, and groans under his load, saying: "Oh, happy the man that is left alone in his corner, and has to take account of nothing but of doing what he is told! Is it this to have children? Is it this to be superior and have subjects? If the business of having subjects is to go on in this fashion, much better have none."

No one knows the greatness of this pain but he who has had experience of it. They say commonly that to be a good superior, and know how to command, it is necessary to have been first a good subject, and have learned by experience what it is to obey, so that it may be said of him with truth what St. Paul says of Christ: *We have not a prelate who doth not know how to compassionate our labors and weaknesses, but one who hath gone through them himself and had experience of them* (Heb. iv. 15). This is certainly a very reasonable saying; but I say another thing, for which I believe all will judge that I have reason enough. It is that, as to be a good superior and know well how to command, it is a great help to have been a subject and have learned by experience what obedience is like, so also to be a good subject and a good son of obedience, it is a great help to have held the office of superior and to have had to issue commands; for thus one will have learned by experience the great difficulty and pain there is in commanding when subjects do not behave nor obey well, and thus he will have no mind to give such pain to his superior. And for this it is not necessary to have been a high superior; it is enough to have had the charge of commanding some companion or assistant. How many times have you omitted giving him an order because you did not dare, and how many times have you felt giving the order more than you would have felt doing the thing all by yourself? Then anyone may see the pain that the superior feels and the affliction which he suffers when the subject makes a difficulty of obeying orders. These people make their superior go groaning and ready to burst with grief over the burden of his office, and wishing it were possible to do everything by himself rather than command others.

And this is not the greatest affliction of the superior. What he feels most is the evil condition of his subject. For after all the superior is a father, and he cannot help being hurt at the weakness shown by his children, seeing their imperfection and the little virtue they have; and that, whereas they ought with the greatest readiness to undertake such duties as are lowly and humble and more repugnant to sense, for these there are offered all manner of replies and excuses, and for these there are brought up at once a thousand objections. Thomas à Kempis says that a tepid and half-hearted religious gets ill and indisposed at once for anything he does not like; he never lacks a pretext for not doing what he has no mind to do. We cannot do what we don't want to do; and what we do want we can do at once, though it be the hardest thing to do. St. Chrysostom says: "Great is the force of our own will; it makes us do what we want to do, and unable to do what we do not want." This, then, is the great grief of the superior; this is what cuts him to the heart, the spiritual infirmity of his subject, his imperfection and want of mortification.

Obey, then, your superiors and be subject to them, and do not give them this pain; do not set them groaning and choking with grief under their burden, *for this is not expedient for you.* This may stand for the third reason. See that this is not a thing suited to you either, since you also will go groaning and choking with grief under the burden, and you will lead a very cheerless life, as they find out by experience who go on in that way. See how they will leave you alone for a sick member, and will leave things undone; and that certainly will not be to your credit. See how they will condescend to your imperfection and let you do as you like; and so you will be doing your own will in things and not God's will, which is a thing that we ought greatly to dread, as we have said above.

CHAPTER XI

Of a Very Main and Efficacious Means for Gaining the Virtue of Obedience in Its Perfection, Which Is to Obey the Superior as Christ Our Lord

ONE of the chief and efficacious means for gaining the perfection of this virtue, or rather the chiefest and most efficacious of all, is to consider God in the superior, and make account that it is God Who commands us, and that we do not obey men, but God Himself. The Apostle recommends this means to us, and repeats it in many places. Thus, writing to the Ephesians (Eph. vi. 5), he commands them to obey even temporal and heathen masters as Christ our Lord. St. Basil well observes: If the Apostle St. Paul commands us to obey the powers of the world as we would Christ, though they were men whose life at that time was steeped in wickedness—and the Apostle St. Peter agrees with him: *Servants, be subject to your masters, not only to the good and mild, but also to the ill-tempered and choleric* (I Pet. ii. 18)—how much more reasonable will it be that we religious should obey, as we would Christ, our spiritual and religious superiors, who desire in all things to do the will of God. And presently he returns to the subject: *Not serving them to their face, as though you desired to please men, but as servants of Christ, doing therein the will of God, serving with hearty good will, as to the Lord and not to men* (Eph. vi. 6-7). We are not to look upon man with our outward eyes, but with our inward eyes upon God, because we no longer live with men, nor have we entered religion to serve men alone, but God. And, writing to the Colossians, he repeats it once more: *All that ye do, do it with good will, as serving the Lord and not men alone, and as hoping for your reward from God* (Col. iii. 23-24), and not from men.

Our Father, resting on this doctrine, greatly recommends this means to us, and lays great stress on it, and often repeats the mention of it in his Constitutions. "It is very conducive to improvement and quite necessary that all should give themselves to entire obedience, recognizing the superior, whoever he be, as holding the place of Christ our Lord." And elsewhere: "It is likewise very necessary that all should obey not only the superior of the whole Society or the house, but also the subordinate officials who derive authority from him, and accustom themselves to look not at the person whom they obey, but at Him for Whose sake and Whom they obey in all, Who is Christ our Lord." And in the Sixth Part, where he treats more expressly of this virtue of obedience, he lays down this principle: "If you wish to attain to the perfection of this virtue, you must ever keep before your eyes Christ our Lord, for Whose sake and Whom you obey in man."

The force and efficacy of this means will be well seen by this consideration. If Christ Himself in person appeared to you visibly, and bade you do this or that, with what readiness would you obey, with what good will and cheerfulness, with what conformity and submission of judgment! Never would a thought occur to you to discuss or doubt whether it were well or ill done; but blindly, without any discussion, you would embrace it for this reason, which is above every reason: "God commands it, God wills it; it is the better thing." And you would hold yourself very fortunate that He was pleased to make use of you; and the harder and more difficult the thing commanded was, the greater boon and favor you would take the command to be. This, then, is the means which we now suggest. And that we may better appreciate it, as in all reason we should, St. Basil accompanies the suggestion with these words: "Do not take this for a pious reflection of my own; it is a truth expressly laid down in the holy Gospel, where Christ Himself says: *He that heareth you, heareth me* (Luke x. 16)." So the saints explain those words, and say that Christ did not utter them for the apostles only, but for all other religious superiors. Hence came Cassian and all those holy monks to practise this doctrine and take all the commands of superiors for commands of God, because Christ Himself says so and bids us expressly not to look at the person of the superior, but at God in him, even though the superior be not what he ought to be. *On the chair of Moses are seated the scribes and Pharisees; observe, then, and do all things that they tell you, but according to their works do ye not* (Matt. xxiii. 2-3).

Thus what we have to regard in obedience is God and God's will; whether it be declared to us by Himself, or by means of an angel, or by means of a man, or by means of Peter and John, it is all one. We have to take one just as we take the other, because it is God Who commands through the superior, in His name. So St. Bernard quotes St. Benedict saying thus: "The obedience paid to our elders is paid to God Himself, since He Himself says: *He that heareth you, heareth me.* Hence we see that all that is commanded in the name of God by man His vicar—there not being manifest sin—is to be taken not otherwise than as God's command; for what matters it whether it be by Himself, or by His ministers, either men or angels, that He manifests His will to me!"—*Obedientia quae exhibetur maioribus Deo exhibetur; ipse enim dixit, qui vos audit, me audit. Unde quidquid vice Dei praecipit homo, quod non sit certum displicere Deo, haud aliter accipiendum est quam si praeciperet Deus: quid enim interest utrum ipse, aut per suos ministros, sive homines sive angelos, hominibus innotescat suum beneplacitum?* St. Bernard, further on this topic, quotes the common saying and sentence: "Whether it be God or man His vicar that commands you anything, it must be obeyed with equal care and regarded with equal reverence, provided man command not things against God." We must not look for miracles, nor want God Himself to speak to us and teach us in person. *In these latter days God hath spoken to us by His Son,* says St. Paul (Heb. i. 2). And the Apostle and Evangelist St. John: *The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father himself, hath told us* (John i. 18). At present God wishes us to live in faith, and take the superior to be in His place.

St. Augustine says that God has wished us to understand this in what he did to Cornelius the centurion, as related in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts x.). This Cornelius was a Gentile, but a God-fearing man, well practised in good works, in almsdeeds and prayers. God wished to convert him and teach him the truth of our faith, so He sent an angel to say to him: *Cornelius, thy prayers and almsdeeds have been acceptable before God: wherefore send to call Peter, who dwelleth in this neighborhood, and he will tell thee what thou hast to do to be saved* (Acts x. 4-6). St. Augustine says: "Could not the angel have taught him? Could not God, Who sent the angel, teach him by Himself?" The saint answers: "He sent him to Peter, and would not instruct him by Himself, nor by angels either, but by men; because God wishes to honor man, and that we should obey and subject ourselves to man, especially since He has become man and for our sakes became subject and obedient to men: *and he was subject to them* (Luke ii. 51)." The saints make the same observation on the conversion of the Apostle St. Paul. When Christ appeared to him in person, *he asked Him: Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* He would not declare His will to him Himself, but said to him: *Go into the city, and ask there for a man called Ananias; he will tell thee what thou art to do* (Acts ix. 6-7). St. Bernard says: "What great sweetness of the wisdom of God! The man whom Thou dost speak to Thyself, dost Thou send him to men to be taught Thy will? Yes, because God wishes to dignify man, and give him this honor that we should hold him in God's place, and take the voice of the superior as being that of God Himself"—*O sapientia suaviter vere omnia disponens! Eum cui tu loqueris erudiendum de tua voluntate mittis ad hominem, ut socialis vitae commendetur utilitas.*

And we are not worse off on that account than those to whom God spoke by Himself, but rather our merit is greater, as we merit more by believing the things of faith, which we do not see, than we should if we did see them. Christ Himself accordingly said to Thomas: *Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed* (John xx. 29). So it is in this obedience, whereby we obey our superior as

God. We proceed by way of faith, taking it for granted that all that the superior ordains is the ordinance of God and His will. Thus in a certain way we merit more, and there is more cause for rewarding us, than if we obeyed Christ Himself in person. The saints say of almsgiving, and Christ says it Himself: *Verily I say unto you, the good ye have done to one of my little ones, ye have done unto me* (Matt. xxv. 40). So God will reward a kindness done to a poor child as if it were done to Himself. Some saints even observe that in a certain manner he does more who gives a kind gift to a poor child for love of Christ than if he gave it to Christ Himself; just as he does more, and shows more love for his friend, who welcomes and entertains a servant of his for love of him than if he welcomed and entertained that friend in person. There is not so much to be said for the latter welcome, for the dignity and credit of the person entertained calls for it; but when love for a friend goes the length of welcoming aught that is his for love of him, and giving it the same good treatment that one would give to himself in person, there is more in that. So it is in obedience; and so St. Bonaventure says: "It is a high degree of obedience to obey what God immediately commands and ordains; but in some sort it is a higher degree to obey man for God, and sometimes the merit and reward will be greater; for there is a greater humiliation of heart in obeying man for God, greater denial of self-will, greater resignation of man to God, as it is more to obey a king's servant for love of the king than to obey the king himself. If God came Himself in person to command you, would it be anything much if you obeyed with promptitude and resignation? But for love of Him to obey a man like yourself, and submit to him with entire resignation, is an act in which there is much to reward and appreciate.

CHAPTER XII

That It Is a Necessary Means for Acquiring the Virtue of Obedience to Obey the Superior as Christ

THIS practice of not regarding the person of the superior as man, but looking to Him Whom we obey in this man, Which is Christ our Lord, is not only a means for obeying better and more perfectly, but is absolutely and definitely necessary for gaining the virtue of obedience. He who does not reckon that it is God Whom he obeys, will not only not be perfect in obedience, but will not be a good subject at all; there will always be something wanting in his practice of this virtue. This we will put in a practical light for all eyes to see, as they say, since it is a ground of great importance. If you regard your superior as man, man for man, you are a man as well as he is. And though he be ever so learned, prudent, or holy, you will say that after all he is but a man, that he cannot know all things, nor all the reasons in each case, and that he may well make a mistake and be wrong on some one point or other. This consideration will carry you on to think that, like other men, he has his bias and particular inclinations, that move him to this side rather than to that, and make him not regard your side of the case with such favorable eyes as your opponent's. Above all, when the thing commanded clashes with your love of your own ease, then self-love (a great solicitor) will find acute and dainty reasons in your favor, and a thousand replies and solutions to the contrary. Thus you will never get so far as to take the thing in silence, and entirely leave off your own will and understanding, because, given human reasons, there will never fail you other human reasons to the contrary. But if you do not look upon your superior as a man, subject to errors and miseries, but consider Who it is that you obey in that man, Which is Christ our Lord, Who is sovereign wisdom, goodness, and charity, and Who can neither deceive nor be deceived, then all your arguments and reasons are silenced, and your submission is complete; for this reason, *God wishes it, God commands it, it is the will of God,* admits of no reply nor solution. So says the Prophet David: *I was silent and opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it* (Psalm xxxviii. 10). I have not complained, O Lord, in my troubles, but like a dumb man I have been silent and opened not my mouth, because I know that Thou hast sent me them. Oh, that we went about things in this way! With what spirit should we go about them! With what promptitude and perfection should we obey! At the voice of the superior we should at once leave the letter of the alphabet that we had begun to form; we should remember that it is the voice of Christ. We should hold it for discourtesy and bad manners to hang back and say: "Just wait; I am coming now, I am coming presently." How we should conform our will! How we should surrender our judgment! All difficulties would be smoothed down thereby.

Hence the solution of a doubt very much to our purpose. How is it that a religious man, who has lived years under obedience and daily practised it, has not got the habit of obedience nor gained the virtue, although all philosophers and divines agree that a virtuous habit is got by frequent acts and practice? The reason and solution is this, that habits are gained by corresponding acts, done for the formal motive of the virtue. Now the obedience of which we speak is a religious virtue, a species of the virtue of religion, which regards God and the worship and honor of His Divine Majesty. Therefore, when in obeying you do not purely regard God in the superior, nor obey because such is the will of God, but rather to please the superior, or because he is a man of position, or for fear of penance and reprimand, or because what they tell you to do is what just suits you, or because the order is given in courteous language, or for other like motives, these are not acts of the virtue of religious obedience, because the formal and religious motive of obedience is wanting there; and you have not gained the virtue of obedience thereby, nor ever will gain it as long as you live, if you go on in that way; but you may very well get to a politic obedience, such as there is among soldiers and seamen, and in any other body and society, but it will not be the virtue of religion.

Therefore our Father instructed us that we must not obey the superior because he is a very prudent man, or because he is a very good man, or a man highly qualified in any other gifts, but because he holds the place and authority of God our Lord. Set that aside, and fix your eyes on other mere human reasons, then, he said, the force of obedience is lost. It will no longer be the virtue of obedience nor an act of religion, because in that way out in the world you would follow the opinion of prudent men and men of great learning and experience; that is living with men and not with God. The more you regard these human reasons and the more you are guided by them, the further will you stray from the divine way and the true virtue of obedience and let yourself down to obey men alone. Following this train of thought, he goes on to say that we ought nowise to look to see whether it is the cook or the superior of the house that commands us, nor whether it be this man or that, since it is not for their sake that we obey, but for God's sake alone. We should obey subordinate officials with the same humility, readiness, and submission as the superior in chief.

The blessed St. Francis was come to this perfection of obedience. He said: "Among other favors that the Divine Bounty has bestowed on me is this grace, that I could as readily obey a novice who had worn the habit for one hour, if he were given me as guardian, as a very ancient and prudent friar." He went on to say that, according as the superior whom we obey has fewer qualities and less authority, so is our obedience more perfect and agreeable to God. And it is a common saying amongst us, that he who obeys the cook, refectorian, or sacristan shows more obedience than if he obeyed Father Minister: and more in obeying Father Minister than Father Rector, and Father Rector than the Provincial or General. For obedience rendered to the General may be motived by a consideration of the respect due to his person and place, or by a desire to gain his favor; whereas the obedience paid to a subordinate official can have no other motive but God.

Our Father adds, in confirmation of what has been said, that he who is not entirely obedient to subordinate officials will not be entirely obedient to other superiors either, since true obedience does not consider the person obeyed, but God for Whom and Whom it obeys in all persons. In that other man there is wanting the formal motive of true obedience; since, if he obeyed for God, he would obey also the subordinate officials, who hold in his regard the place of God; and since he does not obey them, it is a sign that, when he obeys other superiors, he does not obey for God, but out of regard to men, and that will not be perfect religious obedience.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Other Great Advantages There Are in Obeying the Superior as Christ

BEYOND those mentioned let this be the first, that we gather great strength and confidence that we shall be able to do what is commanded us and acquit ourselves of it well. There is this difference between God's commands and men's commands, that men often command us what we cannot do, and give us no strength or power to do what they command; but God never commands us anything but what is in our power, and gives us power and strength to do and accomplish what He commands. And here in religion we have very particular need of this strength and confidence in God, since we are called to do great and difficult things. Not to lose heart in them, it is a great help, and a source of much courage and confidence, to consider that God commands me this, and since He has put me in such an office and ministry, He will enable me to do what He commands. Thus one of the great consolations that they have who go to the missions of the Indies, and to other high enterprises, in the midst of the labors and dangers that present themselves, spiritual and temporal, by sea and by land, is: "Do Thou draw me well out of this; *I am Thine, save me* (Psalm cxviii. 94)." It is this, St. Chrysostom says, that Christ our Redeemer wished us to understand when He sent His disciples to preach and convert the world, and said to them: *Lo, I send you* (Luke x. 3). As though He had said: "Though you are weak, and your enemies strong, and the dangers great, you have nothing to fear, no ground for discouragement, because you go by My order and in obedience to Me. I am He Who sends you, and will deliver you from all the evils and misfortunes that may happen, and will give you victory over all your enemies." This was the comfort of the disciples in all their labors and dangers. And such also should be our comfort in our ministries and in all the things that obedience commands us. God sends me, God commands it; He will give me strength to do it. When God ordered Habacuc to take the dinner he had prepared for his harvest people, and to carry it to Daniel, who was prisoner at Babylon in the lions' den, the prophet answered: *Lord, I never was at Babylon, nor do I know the lions' den; and immediately an angel took him by the hair of his head, and carried him to Babylon, setting him at the mouth of the den* (Dan. xiv. 34-35). This shows us how ready and how willing God is to assist us in the execution of His commands.

Further, this obeying our superior as if he were Christ is a continual exercise of doing ever the will of God. Thereby one may live perpetually kindled and inflamed with love of God and in continual prayer; for to make acts of doing this, the will of God, and rejoicing therein is an excellent and profitable prayer, and a very good way of walking in the presence of God.

Further, he who lives in this way does not mind whether the superior orders this or that, for he makes no account of anything except that in doing what he is ordered he is doing the will of God, and this is his meat, and his delight and purpose in all that he does.

Further, he who considers God in the superior, and makes account that he has put himself in the hands of God, and that it is God Who directs and governs him, lives in great peace. He makes no schemes, he has no cares as to what they are to do with him, since he has placed himself in good hands and is at peace. *The Lord is my shepherd, and nothing will be wanting to me* (Psalm xxii. 1). I am certain that nothing will befall me but what He wills, and He will never will aught but what is best.

Oh, what blessings and spiritual riches should we find if we accustomed ourselves to recognize God in the superior, and to account that we live with God and not with men! A very ancient father used to say that he lived twenty years and more in religion without understanding what manner of thing obedience as unto Christ was, and how one serves God and not men. And do you think that you understand it because you have read it or heard it somewhere? That is not enough; we must learn to put it in practice in the manner that has been laid down, that so we may attain the perfection of this virtue and enjoy all these advantages.

CHAPTER XIV

That God Takes as Spoken against Himself Any Disparaging and Complaining Words Spoken against the Superior

AS, when we obey the superior, we obey and honor God, Whom he represents and in Whose place he stands, so also any disrespect to the superior is disrespect to God. The same reason holds for the one and the other. And Christ our Redeemer spoke in like manner of both. *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me* (Luke x. 16). And St. Paul, writing to the Romans, gives this reason: *Since there is no power but of God, he who resisteth the power and ordinance of superiors resisteth God* (Rom. xiii. 1-2). Holy Scripture is full of this. When the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, who were those whom God had given them for superiors, because they found themselves in the desert with nothing to eat, and repented of having gone out of Egypt, the text says: *Moses and Aaron said to the people: The Lord hath heard your murmuring against Him; as for us, who are we? Not against us have ye murmured, but against God* (Exod. xvi. 6-7). And when the children of Israel rejected Samuel, and asked to have given them a king, as the other nations had, God said to Samuel: *They have not rejected thee, but me* (I Kings viii. 7). In this way they explain also that text of Isaias: *Think it ye a light matter to be troublesome and burdensome to men, whom God hath sent you to rule and govern you? Understand, then, that it is not a little thing, but a serious thing, for ye are troublesome even to my God* (Isaias vii. 13); since the offense is done to God, and He takes it as done to Him.

How much God abhors these murmurings against superiors, and how He takes the injury for His own, is seen in the great and extraordinary chastisements wherewith He has punished it. Of Core, Dathan, and Abiron Holy Scripture relates that He punished them with a fearful punishment for murmuring against Moses and Aaron, and saying that they were arrogant in their government. The earth opened and swallowed them down alive to hell, with their women, houses, and families; and fire came down from heaven and burned two hundred and fifty others (Num. xvi. 33, 35). St. Thomas (2a—2æ, q. 93, art. 2) here calls attention to the fact that God chastised more rigorously and signally those who murmured against their superiors than those who outraged immediately God Himself by their idolatry in adoring the golden calf. These last He was satisfied with putting to the sword, but for the former He brought down fire from heaven, and set the earth ablaze, and swallowed them down alive to hell; to give us to understand, says St. Thomas, how greatly God resents any insult and injury done to those whom He puts in His place.

Hence, by the way, we may understand the reason why in Holy Writ the sin of disobedience is compared to the sin of idolatry. *As the sin of divination by diabolic art, so it is to contradict obedience; and as the sin of idolatry to refuse to submit* (I Kings xv. 23); so said the Prophet Samuel to Saul when rebuking him for his disobedience. St. Gregory and St. Bernard give the reason of this comparison: for, as the sin of idolatry and holding consultation with the devil is a renunciation of the worship and reverence due to God, so also the sin of disobedience and disrespect to superiors deprives God of the reverence and honor due to Him, since they stand in the place of God. Furthermore, as the idolater, abandoning the true God, adores and honors an idol of wood, so the disobedient man, ceasing to follow the true rule, which is God, follows the false rule, which is his own judgment and human reasonings.

But to come back to our point, on one occasion God very nearly destroyed all the children of Israel in the wilderness for murmuring against Moses and Aaron, sending them serpents to bite them (Num. xxi. 5). St. Paul quotes this instance, writing to the Corinthians: *Nor murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer* (I Cor. x. 10). Mary, the sister of Moses, was also punished by God for the same offense with a grievous leprosy, and with that He would have her banished from camp for seven days, notwithstanding all the prayers of Moses for one so dear to him. And he who could hold back the anger of God not to vent itself at one blow upon that idolatrous people, did not succeed in getting his sister pardoned without due satisfaction (Num. xii. 10-15).

From this precedent St. Basil adopted the punishment which he prescribed for any religious who was guilty of murmuring or detraction. He would have the offender separated from the community, not only his person, but also his things. His work was not to be mixed with that of the others; but, as they do with the plague-stricken, his person, his clothes, and all that he had touched or handled was cast out, not to infect the rest; thus he was to be separated from the community like an excommunicate. He was to be left alone; none was to go near him in prayer, at meals, at the hour of repose or work, that so he might be ashamed of himself and amend.

Pope Nicholas I, writing to the Emperor Michael to rebuke him for insolence as having spoken disrespectfully of bishops, cites to this purpose the story of David. When Saul was pursuing him and close in upon him, David found the king one day alone in a cave, where he might have slain him with impunity. But he would not lay hands on him, taking it for a treasonable deed to lay hands on the Lord's anointed, however wicked he was and such an enemy of his. But he ventured to cut off a piece of the hem of his garment; and afterwards, says Holy Writ, David's conscience smote him for having done even that (I Kings xxiv. 6-8). So, says the pope, a good subject ought to act, recognizing in his superior Christ our Lord, not daring to slash the robe of his superior with the knife of his tongue; and if for once from negligence or weakness, or under the influence of passion, he comes to break out and mention some small fault, he ought at once to be conscience-stricken as David was, for having touched the hem of the superior's garment, however small and minute the fault. And he adds this saying, commonly applied to prelates: "The doings of superiors, though they sometimes seem worthy of reprehension, are not to be slashed with the knife of the tongue, because they hold the place of God"—*Facta superiorum oris gladio ferienda non sunt, quamvis reprehendenda videantur.* Therefore the Lord Himself says: *Thou shalt not murmur against the Gods—Diis non detrahes* (Exod. xxii. 28). He calls them Gods, and wishes them to be reverenced as such.

To what has been said it may be added that not only is injury done to God and to the superior, but also much harm is done to the subject, speaking to whom the murmuring is brought out; for it discredits the superior in his eyes, and diminishes the good opinion and esteem that he had of him, and makes him conceive some sort of aversion and disaffection for him. Hereby the authority and force of obedience is greatly impaired, and it may cause the other not to profit by what the superior says or does to him, and that bars the way to his spiritual progress, which should be through the superior. In all these ways it behooves us to be very much on our guard against hindering so much good. The Apostle says accordingly: *Take care that no root of bitterness spring up as an obstacle, and thereby many may be contaminated* (Rom. xii. 15). We should pay great attention to this, even though it be in slight and trivial things; for it would be no slight or trivial thing to deprive the superior of the love, esteem, credit, and confidence which a subject had in him. That is the usual consequence of such murmurings and babblings; that is what we should look to in them, and not to the question of the thing mentioned being in itself grave or light.

CHAPTER XV

That Obedience Does Not Prevent Our Exposing Our Wants, and of the Conduct to Be Observed in Such a Case

NOT only is it no fault or imperfection to propose a difficulty to the superior, but it is a point of greater perfection, and it would be a fault not to propose it in due season. So we have a rule about it, which bids us expressly: "As excessive solicitude for what regards the body is reprehensible, so a proper care of preserving health and bodily strength for the service of God is praiseworthy, and all ought to have it; and, therefore, when anyone feels that anything is doing him harm, or that something further is necessary as regards food, clothing, lodging, office, or exercise, or anything else, all ought to admonish the superior thereof, or him whom the superior shall appoint for that purpose." Our Father had good reason for giving us this rule; for, though it is true that the chief care, and in a way the whole care, of things necessary for health falls on superiors, yet after all they are men, not angels, and, being such, they cannot know if you have need of anything beyond the common, nor remember all particular cases; so it is needful for you to help them in the matter, reminding them and exposing your want that they may provide. The difficulty is in exposing your want in the proper way, for there is great danger of self-love and private judgment coming in. To proceed without suspicion of that, our Father says there are two things to observe. The first is, before making your statement, to have recourse to prayer, and after that if you judge you ought to represent the case to the proper authority, to do so. That does not mean that you are just to say a Hail Mary, and straightway state anything that your fancy suggests; "prayer" here means that before any statement you should recollect yourself first, and look whether this exposition of your wants is in accordance with the greater glory of God, or whether you are seeking yourself therein. If the second is the case, you should expose nothing; but if it seems to you to be in accordance with the greater glory of God to expose your want, expose it accordingly.

The second thing to be observed is that, when you have represented your case by word of mouth or by a brief memorandum not to have it forgotten, you should leave the whole care of the matter to the superior, holding that to be the better thing which he shall ordain, without further statement, without importunity coming from yourself or from another, whether your request be granted or not; since each should persuade himself that what the superior, being informed of the situation, shall ordain, will be that which is most in accordance with God's service and our Lord's greater glory. Thus, as well after as before your proposal and representation you must be in a state of great indifference, not only in point of execution for taking or leaving the thing in question, but also in point of being more satisfied and taking that for the better course which the superior shall ordain.

This is the main thing to be observed in exposing our wants, that the petitioner shall be so indifferent about his petition as to remain quite satisfied and pleased, whether the thing be granted or refused. Hereby it will be clearly seen whether he was seeking therein the glory of God, or whether he was seeking himself. If he was seeking purely the will and glory of God, he will rejoice in anything that the superior shall ordain, knowing that to be the will of God declared by the superior. But if he complains and is dejected or murmurs interiorly at a refusal, it is a sign that he was not indifferent nor purely seeking God, but was seeking himself and his own comforts; it was on that account that he was dejected and troubled at being balked of his wish. Thus one of the beneficial results that you should endeavor to draw from the prayer that you make before exposing your wants, is to bring yourself to an attitude of perfect indifference as to whatever reply may be given you, so that it shall make no more matter to you if the answer be Yes, than if it be No. This is the best disposition that you can bring with you to this exposure of your wants, for in this way you will be as happy and as pleased over a No as over a Yes. It would even be a good plan when the answer is Yes to your request, to reflect and consider whether you would have been as satisfied if the answer had been No. If so, it will be an excellent sign, and you will have every reason to believe that, acting upon this Yes, you are doing the will of God. I say, then, that it is not against the perfection of obedience to expose your wants in this way, since there is in that no departure from indifference and resignation. On the contrary, it argues greater perfection and greater mortification, and to fail to expose them would be manifest imperfection and want of mortification, to say nothing of its being express disobedience to the rule aforesaid. A man feels that something is doing him harm, and that he has need of something else; yet he persists in saying nothing about it, thinking within himself: "If they give it me, so much the better; and if not, all right still." Perhaps such a one will think that this shows mortification and desire of suffering. No, it is not mortification and desire of suffering, since he would feel greater difficulty and repugnance in exposing his wants and going with his request to the superior than in suffering what he suffers at present, for he fancies that the superior will take him for a man who has a great eye to himself and his own comforts. At other times you get this specimen of want of mortification, and lack of indifference: "The other day I exposed some want or other, and the superior blew me sky-high, and answered me in such a decisive way that I went off with my mind made up never more to darken that man's door, nor state any want, except in the case of impossibility to stand the thing any longer." All this comes of your not going about the business of exposing your wants with indifference, and your not having virtue enough to take a refusal, and so you prefer to suffer rather than expose anything.

Here should be observed the deceit of the devil and the strength of self-will, that makes us prefer to suffer the need we are under, according to our own will and fancy, rather than represent it, for fear of being met with a refusal. Even in point of self-love and self-interest, this is an error and a blindness. Let us put the matter at the worst according to your ideas, and suppose the superior does say No. Pray tell me, would it not be better to take your present suffering under obedience and in submission to the will of God rather than of your own will, as you are suffering now? Reflect, besides, on the merit that you would have gained by having exposed your wants and kept your rule, which would be no small merit. Nor would you have any reason to fear the awkward consequences that might ensue after you had exposed your case. They would not then stand to your account, as they would have stood if you had not exposed your wants; but they would be put down to your superior, and put down to God, Who directs and governs you through him. To prevent, then, all these ill consequences, and rid us of all the difficulty and shame that might otherwise have occurred to us in the matter, our Father lays us down a rule about it. Whoever does what the rule commands him, what has he to fear and what has he to be ashamed about? A superior cannot take it ill, but must take it well, that one keeps his rule. And the practice that there is in the Society, so common and ordinary, of having recourse to the superior in very small things, makes it very easy; let not your want of mortification make it difficult.

The whole difficulty of this business lies in exposing our wants with due indifference and resignation, wherefore it is necessary to enlarge upon it a little further. A man should not go to expose his wants with his mind made up that what he asks is suitable for him; that would be a source of disquiet and trouble in case of things' not going as he thought. But he must go to expose his wants in a state of doubt, awaiting the resolution and determination of the superior with indifference; and in this way he will be at rest, whatever answer he gets. A student going to ask a speculative doubt of his professor, remains content and satisfied with the answer given because he went as a disciple and with a doubt to one who was his master, and so takes it for the truth and the solution of his doubt. In like manner the truly obedient subject should propose to his superior the practical doubts which occur to him, doubting what is best for him, and not having his mind made up one way rather than another until the superior declares what has to be done; and that he must take for the best and surest course, and as such follow it and rest satisfied with it. So, in the prayer that we make before exposing our wants, we must not make up our minds that this or that is more in accordance with the glory of God. The only thing that we have to make up our minds about is that it is a proper thing to lay before the superior, and that in laying it before him we should let it appear that we are not seeking self, but God. But what we should always continue to doubt is whether in sober reality it is a suitable thing or not, until the superior resolves and determines the question.

This is a point to take great notice of, for hence depends our exposing our wants rightly, and quietly acquiescing in any answer that the superior may give. And as this is a thing of such frequent use and practice here in religion, it is very important that we should hit upon the right way of doing it. It would be a great prejudice to religion, and a thing greatly to be deplored, if we got so much out of hand in this matter that superiors could hardly refuse anything to their subjects without there ensuing bitterness, distrust, and complaints on their part that little love is shown them, they meanwhile remaining obstinate in their view of the matter, and grumbling perhaps at the superior as being rigid and hard, and a man who will go out of his way for nobody. We should reflect that, if we bore with our natural parents' refusing us many things that we asked, and did not take them to be severe on that account, nor lose the love that was due to them—and that while we did not profess at the time to be making war on our will, or gaining the victory over ourselves—now that we do profess all that, it is all the more to be expected that we shall observe the same conduct to our spiritual fathers.

In the days of old, superiors used sometimes to refuse on purpose their subjects' requests, though they might have granted them without inconvenience, simply to practise them in mortification and make them take refusals well; and subjects seized with cheerfulness and alacrity upon the occasion thus offered them of doing violence to their own will. Such was the great desire they had of their spiritual advancement. But how would it be now if not only that which might be granted in reason, but even what is not good for us, cannot be refused us without bitterness and complaints ensuing on our part? How would it be if things came to this pass, that superiors had at times to condescend to their subjects, granting them what they would rather not grant, to avoid greater evil?—a state of things which, as we have said above, a subject ought greatly to dread.

For greater perfection in this representing of our wants, our indifference and abandonment of self should not be confined to the interior, but should also be shown exteriorly in our words and way of putting the thing, that words may march with desires and the exterior aid the interior. That is a good way of exposing our wants, which shows on our part indifference and inward self-abandonment; and the more it shows this disposition, the better will it be. And if the thing be presented in such a way that even the superior cannot make out to which side the proposer inclines, his only object being that upon the case as stated the superior may see what is fitting, that will be a very excellent way of exposing a want. This may be well understood from the following. There is a rule of the Provincial that at consultations, when he proposes anything to the consultors for them to give their opinion on, he shall propose it in such manner as not to show more inclination one way than the other, that so the consultors may speak their minds more freely, and their seeing their superior inclined one way may not give them occasion to incline to that also. This, then, also is a very good way of exposing our wants to the superior—to expose them in words so plain and simple that the superior may scarcely understand which way your inclination lies, that so you may not give him any occasion of condescending to your wish in view of your weakness, but that he may see for himself the more appropriate course to take, without regard to your inclination and desire.

We have two excellent examples of this in the holy Gospel. The first is the way in which Our Lady put before her dear Son the shortage there was of wine at the marriage-feast to which they had been invited. *They have no wine* (John ii. 3). She did not say: "Supply, Lord, this need, as Thou canst, that they may not be put to the blush," but simply represented the shortage. The second example is the way in which Mary and Martha put before Christ our Redeemer the illness of their brother Lazarus. The holy Gospel says that they sent a message of this tenor: *Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick* (John xi. 3). St. Augustine there well observes: "They did not say, *Come, Lord;* they did not dare to say, *Come and heal him;* nor so much as to say, *Give command, and it will be done,* as the centurion said (Matt. viii. 8); they said only: *Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" To him who loves, no more is necessary than to signify the fact. This is the way in which we should lay our wants before our superior, in words so plain and simple as to declare the need, but not the desire, nor personal inclination. In this way we shall be quite safe of his not condescending to us, and of our not seeking ourselves.

The way of exposing our wants is expressly laid down by our Father in the Constitutions, where, treating of invalids who find that the climate of a particular region is hurtful to them, he says that such an invalid is not to ask for a change, nor show an inclination that way, but merely to lay before the superior his ailment and indisposition and the inability he feels to do the work, and all the rest he must leave to the superior, who will see whether it is fitting to send him elsewhere, where he will be better and able to do more, or whether it will be to the greater glory of God for him to stay where he is though doing less or even nothing at all, that being more expedient for him. Now if in a matter like this which seems to touch us so closely, our Father requires such indifference and resignation, calling upon us not to ask for any change or show any inclination that way, how must it be in other things which are not of such consequence? But because sometimes we cannot or do not know how to lay open our wants without giving the superior to understand what we desire or are inclined to, there is an excellent and praiseworthy way of doing things which some have, which is, after making their statement clearly and plainly, earnestly to beg the superior not to mind what they say or try to give them satisfaction, but to seek solely the greater service of God, declaring at the same time that this will be to them the greatest charity and consolation, to let them feel therein that they are doing the will of God; whereas it would be a great distress to them to feel that he was humoring them, for then they would think that they were doing their own will and not that of God or of obedience.

CHAPTER XVI

Of Excessive Solicitude in What Regards the Body, and How Proper It Is to Avoid Singularities Here

WHILE our Father says that it is a praiseworthy thing to take proper care of bodily health and strength for the service of God, so he says also that excessive solicitude for what touches the body is reprehensible. As we have treated of the first head, so we will treat now of the second. In all things, it is difficult to hit the golden mean; but in what regards our bodily health there is particular difficulty, because self-love is a great schemer here, and sets up for being an eminent physician, saying that this is bad for the chest, that for the stomach, that for the head, that for the eyes; and so, under color of necessity, sensuality and love of good cheer very commonly come in.

On this point St. Bernard very properly inveighs against those who have an excessive care of their health, and under pretense of preserving it draw these differences between one dish and another. He says they are disciples of Hippocrates and Galen, not of Christ, and that they find these differences and peculiarities of articles of food not in the Gospel, nor in Holy Scripture, but in books of medicine. "Beans, they say, are windy; cheese lies heavy on the stomach; milk is injurious to the head; water-drinking does not keep up my chest; cabbage engenders melancholy; leeks kindle bile; fish from a pond or muddy water agrees not at all with my constitution"—*Legumina, inquit, ventosa sunt, caseus stomachum gravat, lac capiti nocet, potum aquae non sustinet pectus, caules nutriunt melancholiam, choleram porri accendunt, pisces de stagno aut de lutosa aqua complexioni non congruunt.* "Good heavens," he says, "what are we to make of you, if in our rivers, our gardens, our storerooms, we can hardly find anything to give you? Consider that you are not a doctor, but a religious, and ought to make more account of your profession than of your constitution."

St. Bernard goes on to show four very excellent and practical reasons for the propriety of following the community and avoiding singularities. *"Parce, obsecro, primum quidem quieti tuae, parce deinde labori ministrantium, parce gravamini domus, parce conscientiae."* The first is for your own quiet and ease, for these singularities carry with them these uneasy thoughts: Will they give it me or not? Are they annoyed and bored at giving it me? And if they do give it me, they make me wait; and for once it comes, it often fails to come. No one knows the anxiety there is over this except him who has tried it. It puts me much at ease to be able to get on with the ordinary fare. Secondly, look at the trouble you give over this to the cook, the refectorian, and the server at table; they all have to trot round and round, going and coming to satisfy you; do try to save them this worry. Thirdly, see what a burden you are to the house with your singularities, since the common and ordinary fare stands ready prepared for all, and that is done without trouble; but to have to range beyond this, to suit your whims and unnecessary peculiarities, is very burdensome and tiresome. Fourthly, have regard to conscience, I do not say your own, but your brother's, who sits next to you and eats what they give him, and is scandalized at your not eating; since you give him occasion to murmur interiorly at you, judging you for an epicure; or if he does not thus judge of you, but supposes you need that accommodation, then he forms judgments and inward complaints against the superior and those who should have care of you, for not meeting your needs.

"Some," St. Bernard goes on to say, "seek to justify themselves and back up what they do in this matter by the example of St. Paul, who recommends his disciple Timothy to drink a little wine for the weakness of his stomach. *Do not go on drinking water, but drink a little wine for thy* *stomach's sake and thy frequent ailments* (I Tim. v. 23). To this I reply, first of all, that St. Paul does not take this advice for himself, but applies it to another, and that other had not asked for this indulgence either, but it was given him without his trying or asking for it, whereas you do try and ask for this indulgence and singularity for yourself. Thus I do grievously suspect," says the saint, "the prudence of the flesh coming in under color of discretion, and that being sensuality which you think necessity." Secondly he says: "Let them observe that St. Paul is not speaking there of a religious like you, but of a bishop like Timothy, whose life was then so necessary in the infancy of the Church. Give me another Timothy, and I will feed him, if you like, with powdered gold, and give him balsam to drink."

And he adds by the way: "If you do take kindly to this advice of the Apostle to his disciple to drink wine, I would wish you at least also to take kindly to that word which he adds, *modico,* 'very little.'" St. Jerome, writing to Eustochium on the means of preserving chastity, gives as his first advice not to drink wine. "The spouse of Christ should shun wine like poison"—*Sponsi Christi vinum fugiat pro veneno.* Notice this phrase, which well accords with what St. Paul says: *Wine, wherein is luxury* (Eph. v. 18). St. Jerome goes on to say: "This is one of the principal weapons which the devil makes use of in his war against youth. Neither covetousness, nor pride, nor ambition makes such war on them; wine and youth are two incentives and two fires of lust. Why feed the flame with oil? Why, with a body already on fire with youth, add further fire?"

But to come back to our point, what I am now trying to recommend to religious is what Saints Basil, Bernard, Bonaventure, and others strongly charge us; it is that we should try to accustom ourselves to be content with what is the common usage of religious life, and not seek to be singular in anything, so far as may be. To persuade us to this course, it were enough to see that in this way we shall save many disquieting and distressful thoughts and many judgments of our own and others, as has been said. So, though it were only for our own private interest and our leading a quiet and contented life in religion, we should try to do this, even at the cost of a certain amount of inconvenience, for this quiet and content goes for more than all the benefit that could accrue to us from these singularities. This consideration is enforced by the fact that in this way we shall greatly edify our brethren, give immense satisfaction to superiors, and better please God. Let this be well observed, for it is a very practical and wholesome lesson.

One of the greatest services that you can render, and one of the greatest sacrifices that you can make to God in religion, and one of the greatest penances and mortifications that you can practise, most pleasing to God, most profitable to yourself, most edifying to your brethren, is to pass your whole life in religion without any special privilege or exemption. Live ever in this line tenaciously, and unfailingly observe in all its rigor the common life of religion; be ever content with what is common, the common food that all eat, the common habit that all wear, the common observances that all practise, seeking no privilege, no exemption, no specialty whatever. And since you must do some penance, and have some practice of mortification, let this be your principal penance and mortification. "Mea maxima mortificatio vita communis" [St. John Berchmans].

So the saints and masters of spiritual life say that other penances must be moderated in such a way as to leave strength for this, as being the chief penance. Little store will your superior set by your disciplines and haircloths if afterwards you are not content with the ordinary things that others use, but seek your own ease and convenience in dress, lodging, and so forth. But here you see a penance that you have already leave to do; and superiors will be delighted to see you doing it; and you can do it without danger of vainglory, since it does not look like doing penance, nor do others see whether you are mortifying yourself or not, all the while that it is one of the best of penances, and most pleasing to God that you can possibly do. It looks like a plain and common life, and before God it is a life of singular holiness and perfection, very solid and secure.

On the other hand, one of the things most prejudicial and hurtful to a religious order is for a knot of persons to start practising singularities, and claiming privileges and exemptions, even though it be under color of some hobby of their own, and a title that seems to them amply to justify their doings. So true is this, that St. Bonaventure sets it down for one of the principal sources of tepidity and laxity in religious bodies. Though you have lived long in religion, he says, and done great service in it, yet you may do it vast harm in this matter, since those who entered after you do not see your inward virtue, nor consider how much you have labored before they came; all they see is the present example you give them in observing the rules. In this matter the newcomers look to their elders to lead the way, and as they came first to religion, so also to be first in the exact observance of its Rules, thereby to serve as guides and examples to those who are still in their first fervor trying to serve God. When the contrary happens, they are either shocked at it or proceed to imitate it, relaxing their efforts upon the example of others.

Our Father understood this well, and therefore to prevent the great mischief that might enter in this way, he would have every candidate for incorporation in the Society asked this question: "Will you be content to live in the colleges and fare as the rest fare, without benefit of privileges and peculiarities, without seeking to be treated better than the meanest in the house?" And this question he would have particularly put to men with university degrees, and to others who might come to be men of importance in the order, because in them he thought there might be some danger of their seeking peculiarities and exemptions. Such claimants do not understand the mischief they make in this matter, though it be in small things; for at once your neighbor thinks that he has labored as much as you and stands in the same need as you, so he puts in for the same special treatment; and then another, who is only a little behind, and then another; and so religious discipline comes to relaxation and ruin. "Much better," says St. Bernard to these breakers-up of union and enemies of peace, "much better that you should be no preacher, or have no dexterity in the management of affairs, than that you should enjoy these peculiarities and exemptions; for you do more harm with the one than you do good with the other." Therefore our Father gives us warning beforehand that in the Society there are to be no exemptions or singularities, and no claim of seniority is to avail to secure these, nor your having been a professor, or a preacher, or a superior. Rather we must hold this for a fixed principle, that you cannot hit upon any policy more ruinous to the Society than to give occasion for the idea that, because you are of old standing or a learned man or a preacher, therefore you have a right to look for exemptions and privileges, and to be treated in some way out of the common, and not as is usual with the rest. Those of oldest standing in the Society, and the most learned, are just the people who should give most edification in all things. It is they who, by their example, should uphold and promote religious discipline, *identifying themselves with the humblest (humilibus consentientes,* Rom. xii. 16). This is the end that learning and seniority should serve in the Society.

CHAPTER XVII

An Answer to a Scruple about the Duty of Looking After One's Health

SINCE the chief and best warranted motive that presses upon us to adopt some singularities is the duty that we seem to have of looking after our health and preserving our lives, we will repeat here some things that doctors of theology say on this subject. In the first place they observe, and it is common doctrine, that it is one thing to kill oneself, and take means to shorten one's life on purpose—and that is unlawful and a very grave sin—but quite another thing to take no trouble to preserve one's health or life, nor seek to prolong it; and that, they say, is not unlawful, but lawful. Thus, no one is bound to endeavor to lengthen his life or preserve it by eating dainty dishes or extraordinary foods; or to live in the healthiest places, though he knows that there he shall live longer and enjoy better health; or, again, to get for himself the most wholesome foods that agree best with his constitution, though he know for certain that by that means he shall prolong his life and enjoy better health. This is clear, since the contrary would be a condemnation of all the fasts, abstinences, and penances of the Church and religious orders. Nay, theologians and saints say that to go in search of these things is ordinarily reprehensible, especially in religious. Neither is one bound in sickness to look out for out-of-the-way, very precious, and costly medicines to save one's life, or rare and eminent physicians, but all that is blameworthy in a religious man, who makes profession of humility and poverty. Enough to use common and easy means, that ordinarily meet the case; for bodily life and health is a temporal good, and of very little value in comparison with the life of the soul, and so God does not oblige us to more than this.

And not only from what is extraordinary and out of the way is it lawful to keep aloof, but also from what is common and ordinary. So we see that religious and servants of God eschew the sustenance, sleep, and bodily cheer that others commonly take and that they might take lawfully, and we grant them that, not only as a lawful, but even a holy practice, though they know that it must in some sort injure their health and that in this way they will shorten their lives. As it is lawful, and a thing of high virtue and merit, to expose oneself to danger of death and give one's temporal life, not only for one's neighbor's soul, but also for his temporal life, as they do who serve and minister to the plague-stricken and persons suffering from other contagious diseases, so it is also lawful and very virtuous conduct to expose oneself to a small loss of life, or a little injury to bodily health, in view of helping one's own soul by the benefit of mortification. If, to gain a morsel of bread for the support of his family and the keeping up of some little respectability, a man crosses the sea and goes to Flanders and the Indies, and endures many bad nights and worse days, with much injury to health and danger of life, and we put that down as lawful, how much more must it be a lawful and holy thing to do the like for the spiritual health of one's own soul, to keep the flesh subject and submissive to the spirit, that it may not rebel against it and commit some treason! This is the meaning of doing penance; and if we abandon that, we shall have to abandon also all the penances that are practised in the Church of God.

There is a further question discussed by theologians, whether it is lawful for a servant of God who has a great pain in his liver or stomach, or a very painful wound, to seek no cure and use no medical treatment, but suffer for Christ, supposing there is no danger of death; and they answer Yes. They quote the instance of St. Agatha, who, when St. Peter came in the figure of an old man to cure her breasts that had been cut off by the persecutor, would not consent to his curing her, saying that she had never used any bodily remedy. They quote also the example of many spiritual and holy men, who preferred to suffer a pain in the liver or stomach without applying any remedy, on purpose to mortify their flesh and subject it to the spirit, and to feel and partake somewhat of the pains and Passion of Christ, and were very content and quite cheerful, and benefited by those pains.

Further, to make it evident that neither health nor even life is so valuable as to oblige us to pay such regard to it, or be so industrious to secure and keep it as some imagine, theologians put this case. Suppose a man is sure to die unless they cut off a leg or an arm; they ask if he is bound to submit to the amputation, and they say No. They quote what a certain patient said in such a case: "Health and life are none so precious or desirable as to oblige me to suffer so much pain for them"—*Nam non est tanto digna dolore salus.* Theologians say that a man is not bound to use medicines to prolong his life, though he knows that it will be shortened if he does not use them. For instance, if the doctors ordered him to purge every month, or every year, and take such and such medicines, or to have an incision made on one side and another on the other, he is not bound to do it, although he were to die ten years earlier in consequence. The same doctors of theology say further that, though a man knew that by drinking wine, or drinking it iced, he should shorten his life, he is not bound under mortal sin to give up the wine or the iced drink. Let us apply this, then, to our purpose. If to tickle the palate, to drink cooling draughts, to eat savory and tasty things, and to enjoy suchlike luxuries, men take no account of the preservation of their health, or the prolongation of their life, nor look to that at all, and we do not condemn them on that account, why should a religious be so careful of his health as to upset regular observance, fancying that this will do him harm and that will do him more good! But grant that it is no fancy, but fact: let us put in one scale the need and the benefit likely to be derived from the remedy—a very uncertain quantity—and in the other the trouble and worry, your own and other people's, and the disedification thence ensuing, and other pernicious consequences, and we shall see that this side incomparably outweighs the other. What people in the world do, and possibly you have often done it yourself—to enjoy a delicacy and a tit-bit—is it not reasonable to do the like to enjoy religious life, and go with the community and give no scandal and disedification to your brethren?

At least let us gather this lesson from what has been said, that one is under no obligation to aim at getting these special comforts. As for what regards the scruple, you may rest assured that there is no ground for it, even though you get less than you do get when things are at their worst, whether in health or in sickness, and though you do suffer somewhat in health thereby. You will do the better and the more perfect thing by suffering something and taking it for penance, instead of going about to procure comfort and convenience, complaining that they do not look after you, or make such account of you as they ought. God does not require us to look so much after our health as that.

On those words of Christ: *He that shall inordinately love his life shall lose it; and he that shall scorn and cast it off for me shall find it in life everlasting* (Matt. xvi. 25), St. Bernard says: "Hippocrates and his school teach us how to preserve our lives in this world; Epicurus teaches us to set our hearts on pleasure, and seek our comfort with great zest; Christ our Redeemer teaches us to lose our lives, and scorn the delights and comforts of the body, and make all that of little account in comparison with the good of the soul. See, then, which of these masters you wish to follow; see whether you wish to be a disciple of Christ, or of Hippocrates and Galen." We may add here that we see by experience that those who give way to these fancies and peculiarities are always ill and out of sorts, and often lose their health by the very means they take to preserve it, while, on the other hand, those who, trusting to God and to obedience, follow the community and adapt themselves to everything, live sound, healthy lives in religion. They who ate lentils and did not drink wine, says Holy Scripture (Dan. i. 15), had better and plumper faces than their companions who ate and drank of the table of the king.

Cassian makes another good point. He says that there are some who wish these special comforts to be supplied them, not so much for any need that they have of them, but as a mark of dignity, a piece of presumption and pride. They want more to be made of them than of others, and some difference of treatment accorded, because they are ancients in religion, preachers, professors, and masters of arts. These people, says Cassian, are never very spiritual men, nor distinguished for virtue. Those ancient fathers, he says, who in point of discipline shine as luminaries in the Church of God, were great lovers of common life, great enemies of singularities, and these we ought to imitate.

But we do not mean by this that no one should go to the trouble of representing his necessities, since it is clear that in a large community there are always some who need special treatment, since not all have the same health or vigor of body. It is well that all should understand this, and no one take occasion from what we have said to judge others; but rather, when they see anyone having things specially provided for him, to reckon that he needs it, and have compassion on him and his infirmity. Be not, says St. Bernard, like those who "feel envy where they ought to feel pity and compassion. Such people take their neighbor for fortunate in having better diet and better treatment, while he counts himself unfortunate and miserable for being subject to this necessity and unable to follow the community, and feels that more than the ailment itself." There is no envy on our part, nor grumbling, but rather pity, when we see him who is particularly unwell, treated with more abundant and costly medicines: so, when you see one suffering from this need of special treatment, do not envy, but pity him, and be very thankful to Heaven that you are in no need of more food, more sleep, more clothing, more comforts, but can afford to fare as the community fares. Anyone, says St. Bernard, who looks with envious eyes on the special allowances made for others, shows clearly low thoughts and a heart inclined to sensuality and self-indulgence.

The saint ends with a conclusion wherewith I also may well conclude: "I say not this, my brother, because I have at present any complaint to make on this score, but because I think it necessary to admonish and forewarn you, since there are among you tender and delicate subjects who need some dispensation, either for age or infirmity. But I return hearty thanks to God our Lord that I see many so careful of themselves, so anxious for self-improvement, that, far from these low and unworthy thoughts, they leave out of account the weak and needy among them, and have no eyes to see their peculiarities, because their gaze is fixed on themselves; they are ever complaining of themselves and thinking that they do less than all the others, and so they take them for their superiors and their betters, according to the advice of the Apostle St. Paul, *each thinking the other his superior* (Phil. ii. 3)."

He adds another piece of advice which is very good—not to take any account of those who need special allowances, nor cast an eye upon that, but fix our eyes on one or two of those whom we see to be the most fervent and exemplary in the house, and try to imitate them. And he relates an instance of one of his monks, which, he says, gave him great satisfaction. This monk came to him very early one morning, and said to him: "Woe is me, father, this night at matins I counted and considered thirty virtues in one of my brothers, and not one of them do I find in myself." This is a very good practice, to look at and study our brothers' virtues. "And be this the fruit of our discourse," says the saint, "always to regard in others the height of their virtues, and not what is imperfect and deficient in them; but in ourselves, on the contrary, not anything that may be matter of vain presumption, but only what makes for true humility. For what advantage is it that you can work harder or fast more rigorously than another if that other surpasses you in virtue, is more humble, more patient, more charitable than you are? What matter does it make that he cannot fast or work as hard as you do? Henceforth always see in your brethren all the good that is in them, and that you have not; and in yourself do not look at the good that you think you have, but look how far you fall short of the attainment of perfection"—*Esto magis sollicitus ut scias quid desit tibi.* In this way we shall maintain ourselves in humility, and advance much in religious perfection.

CHAPTER XVIII

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IT is related of Rabandus, a Frankish nobleman, whose vocation and coming to religion was a singular miracle, that he found this life very rough and hard, having been brought up in very easy circumstances; and the Abbot Porcarius, who was then superior of the convent, allowed him sundry special and extraordinary comforts, better suited to his constitution, and ordered them to be given him; but not only did he not thrive thereupon, but every day became more delicate and cranky. It happened one day, when he was at dinner with the rest, who were served only with a morsel of dry bread and some beans, he thought he saw two venerable old men—one was bald, and had keys hung about his neck, the other was a monk—with a crystal vase in their hands, and making a round of the refectory they gave to each monk on his plate something that they drew out of the vase; but him alone they left out without giving him any, and looked at him with a severe and angry countenance. But he got as much as he could from the plates of those who were seated about him something of what they had had given them; and tasting it he found it so delicious that all the delicacies he had eaten in his life he thought were not so tasty and could not be compared with that. Having seen this vision three times, he went to his abbot and told it him, and asked him earnestly to tell him who those two old men were that he had seen. The abbot fell in with it at once and understood that they were the Apostle St. Peter, patron of the house, and Honoratus, its founder; and that the reason why they gave him none of that food which they distributed to the others was because he did not follow the community in all things, but had sundry special dishes. Rabandus, hearing this, did violence to himself, and resolved to follow in all things the common rigid and severe discipline of religious life, which he found much easier and lighter than he had expected. A little while after, he saw the same saints making their usual distribution of that food to the monks, and they gave him some of it also, wherewith his soul was much comforted, and he resolved to bear any hardships and severities that he found in religion.

Caesarius has an example very like this, of a Cistercian monk, a monk rather in habit than in works. Being a physician, he was outside the enclosure the greater part of the year, and appeared in the monastery only upon high festival days. One feast of our Lady he was with the rest singing in choir, and saw our Blessed Lady enter the choir, all radiant and shining, and from a box she held in her hand she poured with a spoon something into every monk's mouth; but when it came to his turn, she passed by without giving him any, telling him he needed none of her drink, since he was a doctor and got good things for himself. This reproach so sensibly afflicted him that, entering into himself, he changed his life, never going out of doors without orders, and mortifying himself much. The next feast of our Lady she came as before to regale the religious, and approached him and, stopping, said to him: "Now that you have amended your life and preferred my medicines to yours, see here some of my beverage; drink as the rest." After that he remained with great delight steady in the monastery, holding all the pleasures of the world in disgust. That drink was devotion, which makes all things sweet.

The same Caesarius relates that there came to the Monastery of Clairvaux a clerk, very fastidious in his diet, who could not stomach the coarse conventual bread; the mere thought of having to eat it made him waste away. Christ our Lord appeared one night to him, and presented him with a piece of the same bread and bade him eat. He replied he could not possibly eat that barley bread. Christ dipped the bread in the blood of His side, and told him to eat it. He tasted it, and it tasted sweeter than honey; and henceforth the bread and all the other coarse food of the community, which he could not touch before, became to him extremely delicious.

The chronicles of the Order of the glorious St. Francis tell us of that famous assembly which was called the Chapter of Mats, because the cells were in the open field, with divisions made by mats between them. Here were assembled some five thousand friars; the blessed St. Dominic was also there. They say that such was the fervor and spirit of penance among those holy religious that it was necessary to curb them. St. Francis being informed that many wore shirts and coats of mail next to their skin, and others iron hoops, and that thereby they were much weakened and hindered from praying and serving the order, so that some actually died, gave an order of obedience that all who had coats and hoops of iron should leave them off and bring them to him, and there were found five hundred such shirts and iron hoops. While they were thus assembled in chapter to treat of the progress of their order, it was revealed to St. Francis that the devils were holding an opposition chapter in a hospital between the Portiuncula and Assisi; and that there were met there more than eighteen thousand devils. Various shrewd devices were then suggested, how to combat and destroy St. Francis and his order and followers. At last there stood up a devil, more artful and subtle than the rest, and he gave his advice to this effect: "This Father St. Francis with his friars are so fervent in their flight and separation from the world, so strong in their love of God, so busy at prayer, and such adepts at tormenting their bodies, that at present you can do little or nothing against them. I advise for the present not to worry yourselves to death so much about them; but let us leave them until this Francis closes his eyes, and there come to be more friars, and we will find entrance into his order for youths without zeal for perfection, and dignified old gentlemen, and dainty-living nobles, and learned men full of arrogance and with a weakly constitution, and they will receive them all to keep up the honor and swell the numbers of their order. And in this way we will draw them to self-love, and love of worldly things, and desires of science and honors; then we shall overcome them and bring many over to our will." This plan met the warm approval of all, and they were much satisfied and elated at this prospect.

TWENTY-SECOND TREATISE

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE RULES

CHAPTER I

Of the Great Favor and Benefit God Has Done Us in Encompassing Us with Rules

AMONG other favors that the Lord has done us in religion, it has been a great thing to encompass us with rules and holy admonitions, that so we might be better guarded and defended from our enemies. The saints very well compare the evangelical counsels to the outer wall or barbican of a city. As a city is better fortified when it has not only a wall, but an outer wall, so that, if the enemy break through and batter down this, the townsmen have still the wall itself left to defend and guard them, so God has done this favor to religious orders in spiritual things. He has encompassed and guarded us in the first place with the strong wall of His law and commandments, and also with another wall or barbican, the rules and constitutions of the order, so that upon the assault of our enemy, who keeps up a continual war against us, at most he may batter down and break through some part of the outer wall, but the main wall of the law and commandments of God still remains intact, and we are safe. A great mercy of God is this, that the temptation that assails you, at most makes you fail in a rule, which is not binding even under venial sin, and that now you make more account of breaking a rule than there in the world perhaps you would have made of grievous sins.

Hence it will be seen how great is the mistake that some weak religious make, who, when they see that they commit faults against the rules and fall into sundry imperfections, fancy that, for their being thus backward and careless, they would do better there outside in the world than being so imperfect here in religion. This is a very grave temptation of the devil, since it touches us on so vital a spot as our vocation. He wishes nothing more than to keep us exposed in the world, outside of the outworks and barbican of the rules and evangelical counsels, because then he will play his artillery against the unprotected wall of the law of God, and perchance he will soon cause you to fall into some mortal sin, which now he cannot so easily accomplish, since you are guarded and defended by the barbican, which receives all the blows, and where all the lances of the enemy are shattered, you meanwhile remaining far from falling into mortal sin.

One fault of the kind you would commit in the world weighs more than the many faults and imperfections which at present you have in religion. Hence, though it seems to you that you live a lukewarm and unprofitable life, bring it home to yourself that you are in a much better state than if you were living in the world. This is one of the reasons why we have to esteem greatly the religious state, and to give daily endless thanks to God for a mercy and benefit so great as that of His having called us to it. And should there be no other good in the religious state but this, it would yet be an exceedingly great blessing, and on this account alone much to be desired and esteemed. Think you it a small thing that, while others walk in the open among the bulls and wild beasts, you are on the parapet looking on from your position of safety? That, while others are sailing amid the tempests and waves of the sea, you are safe in harbor? While others are in the midst of the river of Babylon in danger of drowning, you repose in peace and tranquillity on the bank? But the rules and evangelical counsels are a still greater benefit in this, that they greatly help us to keep the commandments of the law of God; for he who vows to keep the perfection of the counsels very easily secures his observance of the commandments; while, on the contrary, he who has no mind to keep the counsels or to strive after perfection will with very great difficulty keep the commandments of God. It is in this way that St. Thomas explains those words of Christ our

Redeemer, which are recorded in the Gospel: *Of a truth I say to you, that the rich with difficulty shall enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xix. 23). Do you know why? asks St. Thomas. "Because it is difficult to keep the commandments, by which we have to enter the kingdom of heaven, if we do not try to keep the counsels and aim at perfection." But for him who strives to keep the counsels, the keeping of the commandments will be very easy; because it is clear that to give up riches and to possess nothing as your own, nor even to use anything as your own, is a very sure way of being far from coveting your neighbor's goods. And to pray to God for those that persecute you, and to return good to those that do you evil, serves to keep us very far from hating our enemies; and he that never swears, even though what he says be true, is not likely to swear to a falsehood. Hence the saints agree that the rules and counsels which we strive to keep in religion are far from being a burden, but rather help and assist us in the bearing of the burden of the commandments of God.

St. Augustine explains this very well by two comparisons. Speaking of the sweetness of the law of grace, he compares its burden to the burden wings are to a dove. The wings are really no burden to it, nor do they in any way embarrass the dove, rather it is the wings that make it nimble and able to fly. In like manner the wheels of a cart are extra weight, nevertheless this weight is not only not a burden but rather a help to the oxen, and greatly lightens the load, whereas, had it not been for the wheels, they would have been unable to move one half the weight. In like manner the evangelical counsels which we have in our rules, not only do not weigh us down or embarrass us, but rather act as wheels, by which means we bear the weight and the yoke of the law of God with great ease and sweetness, which those in the world bear with sighs and groans, falling a thousand times under its weight because they have not these wheels or wings. For these reasons, then, we ought to be very thankful to God, to esteem greatly our rules, and to be fervent in their observance.

CHAPTER II

That Our Perfection Consists in the Observance of the Rules

KEEP the law and the counsel and it shall be as life to thy soul, and grace to thy lips (Prov. iii. 21-22). Keep the commandments and the counsels, says the Wise Man, and they shall be life to your soul, and grace, honeyed and sweet for your throat and spiritual palate. And the Royal Prophet says: *How sweet are Thy words to my lips; they are sweeter than honey to my mouth!* (Psalm cxviii. 103). St. Jerome, in his letter to Helvidius—which is a reply to twelve problems or questions which he had proposed to him, of which the first was: How shall anyone be able to become perfect?—replies in those words which Christ our Redeemer used to the youth who, the Holy Scripture tells us, came to Him and on bended knee asked Him: "Master, what shall I do to be saved, because I desire greatly to assure myself of my salvation?" Jesus said to him: "Thou knowest the commandments; keep them and thou shalt be saved." And the youth replied: "Master, these have I always kept even from my earliest years." St. Mark the Evangelist says that Jesus *looked upon him and loved him* (Mark x. 21). By the manner and graciousness with which He regarded the youth, Jesus showed exteriorly His love. Virtue and goodness are things to be greatly loved, and they attract the eyes and heart of God. Jesus then said to him: *One thing is lacking to thee: if thou wilt be perfect: go, sell, all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me* (Mark x. 21). In this, then, says St. Jerome, perfection lies, in adding the evangelical counsels to the commandments of God.

The Venerable Bede says that to those who do not content themselves with the keeping of the commandments, but keep also the counsels, there belongs that second crown, which God commanded Moses to put on the first: *And upon that another golden crown* (Exod. xxv. 25). By this second golden crown is to be understood the added reward and glory they shall possess in heaven who here below do more than others, keeping, besides the commandments, the evangelical counsels; and it is for this reason Christ our Redeemer added: *And thou shalt have treasure in heaven* (Matt. xix. 21). Not only shall you receive eternal life if you keep the evangelical counsels, but you shall be very rich in heaven, and your treasure there shall be very great. This mercy God has done to religious, that not only has He called us, not only has He *drawn us out of darkness into His admirable light* (I Pet. ii. 9), that is, to the light of faith, as He has called all other Christians; not only does He wish to raise us to the kingdom of heaven with His dear ones and elect, but He wishes to favor us so that we may be great in the kingdom of heaven, and it is for this reason that He calls us to the keeping of the evangelical counsels, which is that state of perfection that we vow in religion.

It is, then, but reasonable that we should correspond to so great a gift, which indeed we do if we keep that which our holy Father asks of us, "that all who enter the Society and live in it should desire to keep all the constitutions and rules in their entirety, also the manner prescribed for living in it, and that they should strive with their whole heart and strength, with the help of divine grace, to keep them perfectly." In this is our progress and perfection; if we do this we shall be good religious, and if we keep them perfectly we shall be perfect religious.

Our very name bespeaks the obligation we lie under; for we call ourselves *religious* because we have bound and tied ourselves to the observance of the rules and evangelical counsels. *Religious* means one *bound or tied again;* for not only are we bound by the commandments, as are all other Christians, but also by the evangelical counsels, which are contained in the rules. For the same reason, also, the Church calls religious *regulars,* on account of the obligation they have of keeping their *regulae*, or rules. This name is very honorable and is used in canon law; while the Council of Trent, and several popes in their apostolic letters, call us *clerks regular.* Let us, then, strive to bear the name worthily; let us be very *regular,* and truly observant of our *rules,* so that our life may be in accordance with the name we bear. St. Bernard, writing to some fervent religious, urging them to go forward in fervor, says: "I ask and earnestly beseech you to be ever most diligent and solicitous in the keeping of the institute and rules of your order, so that, in turn, the institute and rules may keep you." This means that, by keeping the rules of our order, these same rules will protect us and lead us to perfection.

In the Book of Judges (xiii. 5; xvi. 19) Holy Scripture records that the strength of Samson lay in the tresses of hair on his head; and when these were shorn he lost his strength and was easily conquered and bound by the Philistines. We have here a clear figure of what we have been speaking about. In the case of Samson God placed his strength in the hair of his head, since he was a *Nazarene,* which was then the same thing as being a religious; and in conformity with their rules and customs he was obliged to grow his hair, and not to use a razor on his head. When, then, his hair was cut by deceit, his secret having been discovered through the infatuate love which he bore for his wife Delilah, he lost along with his hair his religious state and his strength. In like manner our virtue and strength lies in the keeping of our rules, which, no doubt, seem trifling and of small importance, like locks of hair; because we are Nazarenes, that is to say, religious, and we are obliged to cultivate and wear these locks of hair; and if you have them cut, you will become like another Samson, without strength, and be easily conquered and manacled by your enemies the Philistines, who are the devils. And as, when Samson's hair grew again, God gave him back his strength, so He will give back yours, if you once more set yourself to the observance of the rules and ceremonies and minute points of discipline of your order.

CHAPTER III

That though Our Rules Do Not Bind under Sin, We Should Not Make That an Excuse for Neglecting to Observe Them

OUR rules and constitutions do not bind under sin, either mortal or venial, and this also holds good for the other ordinances and commands, except when the superior shall command in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, or in virtue of holy obedience, as is set down in the Constitutions. Our holy Father did not wish to bind us under sin; but no one should make this an excuse for breaking them, which is apt to be a very common temptation, whereby the devil makes many to fail in the observance of their rules. Our Father, desiring on the one hand to remove from us any occasion or snare of sin which might rise from the obligation of the constitutions and rules; and, on the other hand, wishing that we should keep them entirely and perfectly, without dropping any degree of perfection, says: "Instead of fear of offense let there come in love and desire of all perfection, and of doing what will be to the greater honor and glory of Christ our Redeemer." And in the beginning of the Constitutions and Rules, he says: "The interior law of charity, which the Holy Spirit is wont to write and imprint on our hearts, is to aid us hereto;" which is what the Lord said by St. John (xiv. 15): *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

For him who loves, it is enough to know the wish of the beloved. For a good son, it is enough to understand the will of his father, without further apprehensions or fears. Whoever breaks rules and holds them of little account because they do not bind under pain of sin and hell, is no good son, and no good servant. Otherwise, I ask you, what sort of servant would he be who had made up his mind never to do anything that his master commanded unless he commanded it sword in hand and under pain of death? And what sort of wife would she be who said to her husband: "I don't mean to be a bad woman, or to be unfaithful; but beyond that, let me tell you, I am going to do everything that I take a fancy to do, though I know that it will annoy you"? Now, such are they who, because rules do not bind under pain of sin and hell, go and break them. This is the way of slaves, who serve only for fear of the whip and chastisement. An author has said: "Bad people keep away from sin and evil-doing for fear of pain and chastisement; good people keep away from sin and evil-doing for love of virtue"—and to please and better satisfy God.

St. Gregory relates that a monk called Marcius betook himself to the solitude of the desert on the Marsu Mountains [Abruzzi]. Here he fastened himself to a rock by means of a chain attached to his ankle, so that he could not go further than the length of the chain. St. Benedict, hearing of this, sent one of his disciples to him to tell him: "If you are the servant of God, let not an iron chain bind you, but the chain of Christ." The monk immediately obeyed and took off the chain, yet he, nevertheless, never went further than where he was accustomed to go when fettered by the chain. So with us, our Father has taken off the chain of iron, not wishing to tie us with rules binding under obligation of sin and hell, but with the chain of the love of Christ. That should be a more forcible motive to induce us to keep the rules than the iron chain of fear of sin and punishment.

But here there are two things to observe. The first is that, when the constitutions and rules contain any matter that bears on the vows that we take, or is forbidden by natural law, then they will bind us under pain of sin, not by virtue of the rule and constitution, but by reason of the vow or natural law, as we observed above, speaking of poverty. The second thing to observe is that, though the rule of itself does not bind under pain of sin, yet one may sin in breaking it, by there being some intermixture of negligence, laziness, disparagement or disregard of rule, or other like things, as St. Thomas well observes, speaking of the rules of the Order of St. Dominic, which also of themselves do not bind under pain of any fault, either mortal or venial.

CHAPTER IV

That although the Matter about Which a Rule Deals Is Trifling, This Is No Excuse, but Tells Rather against Him Who Does Not Keep It

ANOTHER very common temptation which the devil is apt to put in our way, so that we may fail in the observance of some of the rules, is to say that the things enjoined are trivial and of small importance, and that it is not in them that sanctity and perfection consists. By this means, aided by our laziness and tepidity, he brings it about that we often fail in their observance; so it is necessary that we should prepare ourselves against this temptation. In the first place I say that he who excuses himself, saying that the matter is of small importance, really does not excuse himself or lessen the gravity of the fault, but rather in a certain way makes it all the graver. This is the teaching of St. Augustine, who, treating of the disobedience of Adam, says that, as the obedience of Abraham, as shown in his readiness to sacrifice Isaac, his son, is enhanced in proportion to the difficulty of the thing commanded, "so the disobedience of Adam in Paradise was so much the more grievous in proportion to the facility and lightness of the precept which God imposed"—there was no excuse for him.

What excuse could our first parents have for not obeying so easy a command as not to eat of but one sole tree, when they had so many others to choose from, and perchance these bore even better fruit? What would Adam have done if he had been commanded to do something hard? What, if God had commanded him to sacrifice his wife, as He had commanded Abraham to do with his son? How could he have sacrificed her, he who, rather than displease her, would not refrain from eating an apple which God had forbidden? Just the same way is the fault and disobedience of anyone more grave when he breaks rules that are easily kept. St. Bonaventure observes: "Faults in little things are more blameworthy and reprehensible the easier it was to avoid them and not fall into them." If what was commanded was onerous and difficult, you might then have had some apparent excuse, but in a thing so easy, what excuse can you have?

Further, I ask you, how shall I believe that you will obey in hard and difficult things, if you do not obey in things light and easy? Is it to be thought that he will be up to the greater, who is not up to the less? St. Bernard says: "He who cannot make up his mind to restrain his tongue and his appetite is not a monk." This was a common principle among those old ascetics, for which reason they always began their exercises with abstinence, for they said that if in this, which was exterior, people will not conquer themselves, how shall they conquer themselves in the interior, which is more difficult? How should they hold out against spiritual and invisible enemies, *against the spirits of wickedness in the high places* (Eph. vi. 12), if in those exterior things, and things which could be seen, they were at a loss how to conquer?

Hereby we shall be able to understand whether those desires are true or false, which we sometimes conceive to undertake great things, as for example, to suffer great hardships and mortifications, or even martyrdom in the land of the infidels; for if here you are unable to put up with some slight mortification, if here you break one rule or another solely because you will not accept the mortification of going to ask for leave, how am I to believe that you will undertake arduous and difficult things? St. Bonaventure aptly says: "Many say that they desire to die for Christ, who do not wish to suffer for Christ things very trivial, and words very light. How indeed shall one whom a falling leaf frightens not flinch under the stroke of the uplifted axe? If some small word which another says to you, which, after all, is only an 'airy nothing,' upsets and throws you out, how will you manage when real persecutions arise against you? What a state you will be in when false testimonies of the most slanderous kind are brought against you, and, more than this, when the world even believes them?" It is for this reason that St. Bonaventure advises that we should train ourselves to conquer and mortify ourselves in small things, for he who does not know how to mortify and curb his will in these things, will still less be able to do so in matters of greater moment. To quote the saint's own words: "We should accustom ourselves to bear patiently small trials, because he who does not learn to bear the lesser will never succeed in overcoming the greater."

Denis the Carthusian relates that a certain novice, who started with much fervor the first days, as sometimes happens, came afterwards to relax his efforts and grow tepid. At first everything seemed easy, but after a while humble duties and practices of mortification became unbearable. Among other things, the patched and threadbare habit which novices usually wear was a sore trial to him. Now, while taking a nap a little after midday, he saw in a vision Christ our Redeemer, tired and exhausted, bearing a huge and heavy cross, which He was trying to carry up a flight of steps; but the cross was so large that He could not manage it for the stairs. The novice, seeing this, was moved to compassion at seeing Him in such trouble, and wanted to help Him, saying: "I beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thou wouldst be pleased to allow me to assist Thee in the carrying of this cross." Our Lord turned His eyes on him, and with an indignant and severe countenance said: "How do you presume to take up this so heavy cross of Mine when you cannot endure to wear for My sake that habit that weighs so light?" Having said this, our Lord disappeared, and the novice awoke so ashamed and confounded by this reprehension, and so moved by the vision, that from thenceforward, much as he had been disgusted before, so much the greater was the joy and contentment which the patched and humble habit gave him.

CHAPTER V

Of the Great Mischief That Comes of Making Light of the Rules, Even though It Be in Small Things

HE that is faithful in the least, is faithful also in the greater; and he that is unjust in a little thing, is unjust also in a greater (Luke xvi. 10). On account of the great prevalence of this temptation, whereby the devil endeavors to make us careless in the observance of rules, saying that they are things trivial and of small importance and that our advancement in perfection does not depend thereon, we will set forth two considerations in this matter: first, the great mischief that comes of undervaluing these small things and not taking account of them; secondly, the great good that comes of the contrary. Christ our Redeemer tells us both the one and the other in the words above quoted.

On the first head He says that he who is bad and unfaithful in what is little, will be the like in what is great. That is what the Holy Ghost had said before by the mouth of the Wise Man: *He that despiseth small things shall fall little by little* (Ecclus. xix. 1), even in what is great. This should be enough to make us very diligent and careful in the observance of rules, that we should not dare to fail in their observance under the idea that they are small things and unimportant; since we know on the word of God that he who despises such small things shall fall little by little, and not stop till he comes to great things.

In this way a city comes to be lost and captured by the enemy. The Prophet Jeremy says (Lam. ii. 8): *The Lord hath been minded to destroy Jerusalem*—that city so well fortified and girt around with towers, with wall and barbican—*He hath made his plans, he hath taken his measurements and hath not removed his hand until he hath accomplished his design.* But how did He do it? Would you know? Jeremy says that the barbican fell, and soon afterwards the wall also was breached and battered down, and so the city was entered and taken. In this way, then, our enemies enter and take the city of our soul. The rules, as we saw in the first chapter, are the outer wall or barbican which protects and defends the wall of the law of God. And if you allow this barbican to fall, in a short time the wall also will be destroyed, and your soul sacked and robbed—*He that breaketh through the hedge, the serpent shall bite him,* says the Wise Man (Ecclus. x. 8). If you, then, start tearing down this hedge of your rules, and destroying your palisade, the old serpent will enter through the gap and bite you. If you take away the hedge from the vineyard and do not trouble about what you have within, soon everyone will come and pluck the fruit. *Why hast thou broken down the hedge thereof, so that all they who pass by the way do pluck it?* (Psalm lxxix. 13).

That this point may be better understood, since it is of very great importance, I will put aside metaphors and figures and speak plainly. Do you wish to know how it is that the Holy Spirit tells us that he who despises little things shall little by little fail in great things? It is as theologians and saints tell us about venial sin, and we ourselves teach children in their catechism. Venial sin, they tell us, is a disposition towards mortal sin. No matter how many venial sins we may commit, it can never amount to a mortal sin, nor suffice to kill the soul or sever us from the grace and friendship of God. But they dispose the soul, debilitating, weakening, and unnerving it, so that it is easily overcome by any temptation or occasion which presents itself, and so comes to fall into mortal sin. It is the same with the first cannon shots which are fired against a wall; they do not demolish it, yet they shake and weaken it, so that subsequent discharges bring it to the ground. Or see the drops of water that fall upon a rock; although any one drop in itself is not enough to hollow it out and pierce it, yet it is enough so to dispose the rock that, in virtue of this predisposition, the following drops hollow it out and make a hole in it. *Waters wear away the stones; and the ground by little and little is washed away by freshets* (Job xiv. 19). So it is that venial sin disposes the soul for mortal sin. Little by little we lose the fear of sin, and begin to do that which is away from the love of God, and very soon this becomes something which is against Him. So it is that one who thinks nothing of telling a lie or swearing without necessity, will soon stumble and mix up the one with the other, swearing to something which is a lie, or at least doubtful, and there you see him fallen into mortal sin. He who has no remorse about detraction in small things will soon come across something not so trivial, and find himself in danger of mortal sin. He that is careless about glancing at unchaste objects and is negligent in driving away evil and impure thoughts that come to him is near a fall; for some day, when he is more than usually careless, his heart will get ahead of his eyes or thoughts, and in a moment he will find himself fallen. Thus it is that the devil tries to dispose us to mortal sin by carelessness and venial sin. Thus it is that by breaking the rules and making small account of them we are disposed and carried on little by little to greater evil, until at last we fall into some grievous fault. At the beginning there is some remorse of conscience about breaking the smallest rule; then not so much, till finally we do it without the slightest remorse. In this way a religious becomes careless and tepid in prayer and examen and his other spiritual exercises, for those again are no more than a rule. Sometimes he omits one or other, at other times he makes them carelessly and merely mechanically, drawing no fruit from them. From these beginnings, which seem small, generally come the awful downfalls of a religious.

Thus it is that the saints understand those words of the Gospel concerning the murmuring of Judas, when Mary Magdalen anointed the feet of our Savior with the precious ointment. Judas said that it would be better to sell it and give the price to the poor. St. John, however, notes: *He said this, not because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief and, having the purse, stole from the things that were put therein* (John xii. 6). As it would be his business to sell the ointment, since he held the office of steward, it hurt him that he had lost an occasion of filching "one in ten"; and to make up the loss he determined to sell Christ our Redeemer for thirty pieces of silver. St. Augustine says: "Notice that Judas was not lost when he betrayed Christ. No; his fall did not begin then, for the evil had settled on him long ago; already he was a thief and a lost man, for he followed Christ with his body only, and not with his heart." In like manner, when you see a religious fall into some grave sin, do not think that the mischief began then; he was a lost man before that. For a long time that man had been in religion in body only; he kept not up his spiritual duties, neither meditation nor examen, and he thought nothing of breaking the rules. From these accumulations of dust came all the rest that ensued. St. Jerome observes the same: "That miserable man Judas thought to make up by selling his Master the damage he had sustained by the loss of the ointment." See to what a pitch of evil Judas was carried by covetousness and his beginning to steal things little by little, and his fondness for having something of his own, that we may fear to begin to fail, even though it be in small things.

This is what Job says: *Before the approach of the enemy cometh want* (Job xli. 13). First the soul is impoverished and weakened by the accumulation of imperfections and venial sins, by failure of prayer and spiritual exercises, and then it comes to fall into grievous and mortal sins. He that goes on quite recklessly gulping down imperfections will soon gulp down clear and manifest sins. Let us beware, then, how we give entrance to the devil by losing all fear of breaking the rules and esteeming them of small value.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, says our Lord through the prophet, *lest my soul depart from thee and I lay thee waste and turn thee into a land uninhabited* (Jerem. vi. 8). Learn to conform yourself to that religious discipline and observance which your rules teach you; lest, perchance, God turn His face from you and abandon you and you come to a great crash.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Great Blessings That Follow Upon Observance of Rules, and Setting Much Store by Them, Even in Small Things

WELL done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy Lord (Matt. xxv. 23). In these words of Christ our Redeemer there are well set before us the great blessings that follow from being careful in keeping the rules and setting great store by them, though it be in little and minute things. So passing great shall be the joy and reward that shall be given us for having been faithful and diligent in a small matter, that it is not said the joy shall enter into you, because you will not be able to contain it; but you are to enter into the joy, and it will be over your head, as when you enter a large room that is high over your head. And elsewhere He says that the measure of reward and glory that is to be given us for this shall not be scanty or cut down, but heaped up and overflowing. *Good measure, and pressed down, and overflowing, shall they give unto your bosom* (Luke vi. 38).

But let us see what can be the reason why the Lord rewards so highly those who are faithful in a little matter. The reason is because a man's fidelity is seen in these small things, and what he is likely to do when greater things are put into his hands. So says Our Lord Himself by St. Luke (xvi. 10): *He that is faithful in what is little will be faithful also in what is great.* It is to be observed that He does not say, he that is faithful in what is great will be faithful also in what is little, but the other way about, because fidelity is better seen in little things than in things of great importance. For example, the fidelity of a steward or accountant is not so much seen in the fact that he does not defraud his employer to the extent of a hundred or a thousand guineas, as that he does not even misappropriate one farthing. Likewise, the good servant is known not so much by his discharge of his main duties, as by his accomplishment of small and minute details of things which he was not obliged to do. Likewise the obedience and love of a son for his father is not seen in the fact that he obeys his father in matters of great importance, but that he will not displease his father by going against his will even in the slightest thing. In like manner, the good religious is not so much known by his not falling into grave faults and mortal sins, as by his being careful and diligent in observing all the rules and in carrying out the least command of the superior. It is this that our Lord rewards and honors so highly, showering down great benefits and graces, because they are liberal with him. For, as St. James says: *Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you* (James iv. 8). Indeed, the closer you shall draw to God and the more liberal you shall show yourselves towards Him, by so much the more will He show Himself more liberal towards you, showering down greater graces and favors upon you. He that shall press forward with great diligence and care, striving to please God not merely in those things which are of obligation, but also in the counsels and works of supererogation; and not only in things which are of great importance, but also in the least, striving to do always that which seems to be most perfect and which he understands to be most in conformity with the will of God, he is truly liberal with God, and to such a one God will indeed be most liberal.

These are they that are privileged, that earn His blessing and special favors, that signalize themselves above others in virtue and perfection: so we see by experience. Some of these we have known, highly endowed with spiritual and divine gifts. Of others we have heard tell that, though they were of high seniority in religion, they made great account of observance and exactitude in every, even the least, rule and every prescription of obedience, however minute and small. They were an example, and put all to the blush; and it was by this way our Lord raised them up to such heights of perfection. Even in the world we see that those who serve their masters in this way, seeking to please them in all that they are able to do, in things both great and small, ordinary and extraordinary, these are they that gain the good will and favor of their masters. Now in the house of God it is exactly the same; for those who become like little children, who humble themselves, taking a real pride in the observance of the most trifling things that make up religious life, God embraces, caresses, and shows them many favors. *Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xix. 14). But as for those that esteem themselves greater than others, and go about seeking privileges; who, because of their seniority in religion, no longer make account of small things, thinking them only suited for novices, God will humble and cast them off, according to those words of the Royal Psalmist: *If I was not humble-minded, but lifted up my heart, then let that befall me in retribution which befalls a child new-weaned from its mother* (Psalm cxxx. 2). That is to say, if I shall rank myself with the great, may that happen to me, O Lord, which happens to the weaned child. A mother refuses her breast to the child that has grown into quite a big boy, but takes the little baby in her arms and suckles it. If, then, I will not humble myself and become like a little child, drive me away, O Lord, and let me not come near Thee, as the mother drives away and keeps from her the child that she has weaned. Mothers, when they are weaning a child, rub their breasts with aloes, so that where before the child found delight and sweetness, it now finds bitterness. This curse David invokes on himself, and it overtakes those who lift themselves up to be great folk and disdain to become like little children. Hence, where before they found joy and sweetness in prayer and other spiritual exercises, they now find bitterness, for everything is turned into aloes.

St. Jerome says: "He that desires to give himself in good earnest to God and greatly to please Him is careful over greater and over lesser things, knowing that for every idle word he shall have to give an account to God." He knows that from smaller, one falls little by little into greater, faults; and he is certain that, if he is faithful in small things, God will reward and recompense him by many favors. He, therefore, thinks nothing small, but sets great value on everything. St. Basil, speaking of this, says: "Strive in such a way to set your eyes on greater virtues as not to lose sight of the lesser; and think no fault little, since there is no enemy that, if despised, may not be very hurtful to us and be able to do much harm"—*Studeto, ut maiorum virtutum compos efficiare neque minores tamen neglegito. Nullum omnino sit erratum, quod parvi pendas, quamvis illud tenuissima bestiola minutius sit.*

CHAPTER VII

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the Fourth Book of Kings, Holy Scripture gives the history of Naaman, a very rich and powerful man, in high favor with the King of Syria and general of his army, but covered with leprosy. He had heard tell that there was a prophet in Samaria named Eliseus, who tended and cured all diseases and raised the dead. He procured the favor of letters from the King of Syria to the King of Israel, to have him cured immediately upon his arrival. So he came with a great cavalcade of horses and chariots. On reaching the door of the Prophet Eliseus, his servants went in with the message. The prophet did not come out, but sent to say: "Tell him to go to the Jordan, and bathe there seven times, and he will be healed." Naaman was greatly angered at this answer. *"I thought,"* he said, *"that the prophet must have come out, and with great ceremonies must have invoked over me the name of his God, and must have touched with his hands the place of the leprosy and so healed me;* and now he comes out with this, that I am to go and bathe in the Jordan, as if we had not in our country better waters to bathe in. Let us be off, for it was not for this that we came here." And as he turned round to go back home, thinking that this was a matter of small importance, and that he should take no account of it, his servants, who seem to have been very sensible people, said to him: "Sir, even though the prophet had prescribed a very great and difficult thing, you should have done it for your health; how much more now that he prescribes a thing so easy as going to that river, which is hard by, and bathing in it?" He fell in with this reasoning, and went there and bathed seven times in the Jordan, and came out healed of his leprosy, *his flesh becoming as clean and fresh as that of a little child* (IV Kings v. 14). It is to be observed how what seemed to him a trifle and a thing of little importance was the saving of him. The same happens in spiritual things. In these little and minute things that our rules tell us to do, lie our salvation, advancement, and perfection, as we see also that the perfection of a picture lies in very small touches and lines. Now, if to gain this spiritual health, this progress and perfection, we told you it was necessary to do very arduous and difficult things, you certainly should have done them, and thought it well worth your while; how much more when they tell you that you will gain it by doing such easy things as these? Thus the fact of the rules' being slight and minute things, far from being to us an occasion of neglecting them, should rather be taken as a ground of encouragement to keep them, seeing that on such small and easy things our progress and perfection depend.

It is related in the "Book of the Illustrious Men of the Cistercian Order" that those monks had a rule, at the end of a meal to gather the bread crumbs, and eat them or put them on a plate. It happened one day that one of those monks, a highly conscientious man and a great observer of the rules, had gathered the crumbs in his hand, and, being absorbed and taken up with the reading at table, kept them in his hand; meanwhile the prior gave the signal to stop the reading and rise from table. Then the monk bethought himself and was in a perplexity, for now there was no time to eat them nor to throw them on a plate. Much ashamed of the negligence that he had fallen into in not keeping the rule, he found no way out of it but to go to the superior, tell his fault, and ask a penance for it. He kept the crumbs in his closed fist, and, when grace was over, he went and prostrated himself at the superior's feet, declared the fault that he had committed, and begged a penance for it with great humility. The prior gave him a rebuke proportionate to the fault, and asked him what he had done with the crumbs. He answered: "Father, I have them here in my hand." "Show them." He stretched out his arm, opened his fist, and instead of the crumbs they found most precious pearls. The author here observes that our Lord wished us to understand by this miracle how pleasing to Him are those fervent religious who make much account not only of important but of small and minute rules. Surius also relates this miracle in the Life of the holy Abbot Odo; and says that the thing happened to the abbot himself while he was still a subject, though out of humility he used to tell the story as a thing that happened to another religious.

Caesarius relates that in the time of the Emperor Frederick one of the imperial abbeys fell vacant, to which the emperor was accustomed to provide an abbot. Two of the monks had been elected to that dignity, and, as they could not come to an agreement, one of them offered the Emperor Frederick a large sum of money, which he had got together in the monastery, to choose him. The emperor took the money and gave his word to do so. But afterwards, being informed that the other competitor was a very worthy religious, discreet and virtuous and very observant of his rules, he took counsel with his advisers how he might contrive to choose the deserving candidate and leave the other in the lurch. One of his courtiers said to him: "Sire, I have heard tell that these monks have a rule for every one of them to carry a sewing-needle about with him; when, then, your highness is in their chapter room, ask that less observant one to lend you his needle, as though you wanted to clean your fingernails; and if he has not got one, you will then have a good pretext for not giving him the abbey, as being a man who does not keep his rule." The emperor did so; and, as he had not got one, he asked his competitor: "Father, lend me your needle." He drew it out at once and presented it to him. Then the emperor said to him: "Father, you are a good monk and, as such, worthy of this high honor. I had resolved to choose your competitor, but he has shown himself unworthy of the post, since he does not keep his rule; and we may well understand that one who is neglectful and takes no account of small things will be still more neglectful of great." And on that score he deprived him of the abbey, and gave it to the monk who kept his rule.

The same Caesarius relates that a lady of high rank, wishing to leave the world and take the habit of religion in a monastery where the vicar was a monk named Florinus, on the day of her departure gave a banquet to her kinsmen and acquaintance, and with them invited the said vicar. To the seculars meat was served; but to the religious, fish, because according to his rule and the obedience that he owed to his abbot he could not eat meat. But he, seeing the meat, fixed his eyes on it, and under that craving of appetite gaily took a piece of roast meat from his neighbor's plate and put it in his mouth. But by a just judgment of God, the morsel stuck in his throat in such a way that he could neither swallow it down nor bring it up. When he was choking, and already his eyes were rolling in his head in the effort to get his breath, another religious, who was there as his companion, gave him a good slap on the back with such effect as to make him bring up the morsel. All took it that this had happened in punishment of his disobedience.

In the General History of St. Dominic, the Father Friar Hernando del Castello relates that, while St. Dominic was living in Bologna, suddenly one night the devil began to torment a lay brother with such cruelty that the noise of the blows awoke the other monks, who by the command of the saint took the afflicted brother to the church, but indeed scarcely were ten brothers able to carry him; and no sooner had he been carried through the doors, than with one puff he extinguished all the lamps, so that they were all left in darkness. The devil then continued in a thousand ways to molest the unfortunate brother. The saint then commanded the devil in the name of Jesus Christ to tell him why he was tormenting the brother and how he had taken possession of him. To which the demon replied that the evening before the monk had taken a drink without leave, or without making the sign of the cross over it, as was customary among the religious. While thus speaking, the bell began to ring for matins, and the demon said to them: "I can stay here no longer, now that these cowled gentry are rising to sing the praises of God;" and, so saying, he left the brother half dead, so beaten and bruised that it was two days before he could stand on his feet and use his limbs. St. Gregory tells a like story of a nun who ate a lettuce without making the sign of the cross over it, and the devil at once entered into her.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Some Other Things Which Cause Us to Fail in the Observance of the Rules, and of the Remedy for Them

SOMETIMES faults against the rules are wont to come from a certain shyness and pusillanimity, or rather, a lack of mortification, caused by the difficulty that one feels in going and asking leave of the superior for what cannot be done without leave; hence it will be necessary to remove this difficulty. I do not say that you should not drink, nor eat, nor speak, or that you should not take or receive that which another wishes to give you; but what I do say is, that all this should be done with permission. When you might well do the thing with the blessing of God and of your superior, why do you wish to do it without? But you will say: "Have I to go so many times to the superior about each little childish thing? He is busy, and will be annoyed at it." This is a false impression which I wish to remove. Far from being annoyed at it, superiors on the contrary find this one of the things that most consoles and edifies them; it is their office. Your order sets such store by your being very obedient and doing nothing without leave—that being what makes for your spiritual progress and merit—that it thinks it well worth while to keep this and that and the other superior, whose office it is to give you leave for all that is necessary. Merchants and craftsmen are not apt to be annoyed at occasions arising for them to do a stroke of business; on the contrary, the more customers crowd to their shop, and the more buyers resort to them, the better they are pleased. So it is with good superiors; and for you to think the contrary of anyone is take him for no good superior. How can the superior be annoyed at your coming to him to ask leave for what he knows very well you cannot do without leave? Were you to come to him with some idle tale, or seeking exemptions, you would have reason to fear that he would be annoyed; but where there is an express rule for you to come, it is just the other way about. It gives him pleasure and satisfaction to see his subjects such exact observers of rule, so accurate in their obedience and so particular about small things. On the other hand, superiors are grieved and greatly pained when subjects do not resort to them. Their view in such a case is that you want to get back your liberty and act on your own account, daring to do things without permission, as though there were no superior in the house for you to go to and no rule about the matter. The superior, like a good father, grieves at that; and, desirous as he is of your good, your bad behavior pains him. It is over this that we should make a difficulty, and be careful not to displease superiors herein.

It follows also from what we have said that no one ought to be shy about going to the superior to ask leave for what he knows the rule forbids him to do without leave. Much less should we be shy about telling our brother that we have not leave for what he knows there is a rule about and we are not allowed to do without leave. This is a point of great importance, since some are apt to break rules to escape the mortification of saying: "I have no leave to speak, or to receive what you offer." These people sometimes excuse themselves by saying that they pass it over in order not to mortify the other person; so they do not trouble to say that they cannot do the thing. This is judging your neighbor to be a poor religious and a poor observer of rules. You should take it that he will not be mortified, but edified, at seeing you so observant. Perchance he took this occasion to try you, to see whether you kept the rules. Pride yourself on being a religious, since such you are, and a great observer of rules; no one can take that amiss, but rather should take it very well.

Others excuse themselves by saying: "I do it not to appear scrupulous." This again is a very bad excuse, since to appear a keeper of one's rules is not to appear scrupulous, but religious. He would be in very evil plight who was ashamed to appear a religious, a servant of God, and a great observer of his rules. This is one of the abuses that there are in the world, that, when anyone makes a point of virtue, of frequenting the sacraments, and keeping himself somewhat recollected, people at once murmur and make game of him; and on this account many do not dare to give themselves openly to virtue, as Holy Scripture says of that leading man who came to Christ our Redeemer by night because he did not dare to go in the daytime (John iii. 2). But in religion it is the other way about, and so we should endeavor to keep it always. Among other great advantages that we religious enjoy this is one, that we are in the company of people who are all striving to be more virtuous and more religious, and he who goes furthest in this effort is the most esteemed. A good religious should be so well grounded and so strong in the love of God and of virtue that, though he meet with some contradiction therein, he does not on that account give up doing the good and the better thing, nor blushes to appear a religious and a servant of God. Whoever is ashamed to do this has reason to fear lest the Son of God also be ashamed to uphold and acknowledge him for His servant in presence of His Father, as He says in the Gospel. *Whoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of man shall also be ashamed when he cometh in his glory and that of the Father and of the holy angels* (Luke ix. 26). If a gentleman took a servant to accompany him and do him honor, and that servant were so proud and ill-behaved that, when he went with his master, he stayed on purpose a good way behind, not to appear to be his servant, clearly he would deserve to be dismissed and cast out of his master's household. He, then, has reason to fear the same chastisement, who is ashamed to show himself as the servant of God and observer of his rules.

That we may be the better disabused in this matter, it is well to persuade ourselves that not only those of our own community, but externs also, are greatly edified at our being very exact in the observance of our rules. For example, we are with visitors when the bell rings calling us to some duty, and we say to them: "Sir, we are now called off to this;" and so civilly break off the interview, and go to fulfil our obedience. We know well that some seculars have been edified, and have got more good out of this interruption than they could possibly have got from anything that we could have said to them had we stayed in their company; and the more ancient in religion and the more gifted the person who behaves thus, the greater the edification. Thus great punctuality and exactness in the observance of the rules, and saying that leave must be asked for what the other knows that we cannot do without leave, is not narrow-mindedness nor want of courtesy, even though the person spoken to be a father of ancient standing. Nor is it scrupulosity; it is simply being a good religious, careful to improve: so it cannot offend, but must greatly edify all. If such behavior were a singularity and an extraordinary thing to do, there might, I dare say, be some color of reasonableness in the excuse: "I don't want to appear singular; I am afraid they may think it a piece of priggishness;" but it is not priggishness, it is keeping your rule. Besides, in this way once for all you shut the door to similar importunities, which is a great relief; whereas, if you leave it open, you give occasion for their plying you with the like another time. And besides the good and advantage that you hereby gain for yourself, you confer a great benefit on your brother, who perhaps did not think of the rule; and now by your example he does think of it, and sees the importance of it. You could not have given him a better reminder.

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Jerome there is mention of a religious who was conspicuous in his observance of silence, and on that account was held by all in great reverence. A knight of high standing heard of his fame, and went to the monastery with a desire to speak to him. Seeing him going alone to his little garden, he began going after him, calling him to speak with him, but the servant of God did not stop to wait for him who was calling him, nor answered him a word. Thus going after him, they both entered the garden; and, on entering, the holy man prostrated himself on the ground and, closing his eyes with his hand, said to him who wanted to talk to him: "Perhaps, sir, you do not know that I cannot speak without leave of my prior." Having said these words, he once more prostrated himself on the ground, and said not a word more. The knight, seeing this, had no mind to importune him further; but, so the story goes, returned to his house more edified at his observance of silence than if he had spoken a thousand words.

Of another holy man of the same order it is related in the same chronicle that among many other virtues he had this, that he spoke little, especially in times of silence and in forbidden places, such as the cloister and the church; and not only was he careful not to speak in the places aforesaid, but he would not answer another who spoke to him there. It happened one day that the King Don Henry came to the monastery, and, walking round, chanced in passing through the cloister to see this religious going that way. He called him to speak to him, because he loved him much for the holiness of his life; but he did not care to stop and answer. The king, seeing that he did not answer, began to raise his voice and go after him, calling to him. But the servant of God never stopped, nor answered a word until he got out of the cloister. When they were both out of it, the king asked him why he had not answered before. He then gave him the reason, saying: "In the cloister, where your highness called me, it behooves not us religious to speak, and that is why I did not answer till I got out of it." At this answer, the story says, the king was greatly edified.

CHAPTER IX

Of Other Means to Help Us in Keeping the Rules

BESIDES what has been said, we shall be greatly helped to be diligent and careful in the observance of our rules, first by the consideration of the good example and edification that we are bound to give, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Careful to do good not only before God, but also before all men* (Rom. xii. 17; II Cor. viii. 21). It is not enough for us to be good ourselves; we must shed light on the world by our life and example. *So let your* *light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven* (Matt. v. 16). In such sort we must shine before men that they, seeing our life so exemplary, may praise and glorify our Father Who is in heaven, as men are wont to praise God when they see a tree flourishing and laden with fruit, or a very beautiful and sweet-smelling rose. We are bound to give this good example to all the world, and hold up to them the light of our good life; but this should be done especially to our brethren with whom we live and converse. Now this good example and edification does not consist in your not committing grave faults, but in your avoidance of small ones. Let all see that I am very exact in obedience and the observance of rules, and that I set a value on small and minute points of religious observance and make much account of them. He gives the best example and edification who is very remarkable and distinguished in this; and the older you are in religion and the most advanced in learning, the more edifying it is to see you careful and diligent in small matters. This ought to be the mark of seniority, and in this it should be seen who is of longest standing, in his being the most humble, the most mortified, the most exact, in the observance of rules and all points of obedience, however small they be. Such is the teaching of Christ our Redeemer and Master in the Gospel: *Whoever is greater among you, let him be the least, and let him who is head become as him who serveth* (Luke xxii. 26). These are they who by their good example uphold a religious order, and promote virtue and religious discipline; these are the pillars who keep the house standing. *I will make him as a pillar in the temple of my God,* says God in the Apocalypse (iii. 12). *I have set thee as a pillar of iron and as a wall of brass,* He said to Jeremy (i. 18).

On the other hand, you cannot do more harm in religion than by giving bad example in it; and the older and more gifted you are, the more harm you will do, because example is the most effectual of forces to move and carry others away, as the saints and experience show us; and example is far more potent for evil than for good. If your neighbor sees you, the senior man, practise the rules in this fashion, and make small account of little things, what is he to do, considering the natural inclination that we all have to liberty and laxity, and our repugnance and aversion for walking by rule and under control? When he sees the way well trodden, and the postern gate open, what else is he to do but walk through? That is what he was looking for, and was only waiting for someone to show him the way and rid him of his bashfulness. That is the way religious discipline comes to be relaxed, and you to be the cause and origin of the relaxation. You will have an account to render to God, not only of your own faults, but of the faults of others, since you were the cause of them by your bad example, according to the saying of the prophet: *From mine hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from the sins of others spare thy servant* (Psalm xviii. 13). This should help us to be very observant of our rules, and not do anything that might give disedification.

The second means to secure the observance of the rules to be in full vigor is a very familiar and easy means, and our Father lays it down in his Constitutions and Rules, where he says: "Sometimes every year let all ask the superior to give them a penance for neglect of observance of the rules, that this may be an indication of the care they have of their spiritual advancement in God's service." We should have such a high idea of the rules that, every time we fail in their observance, we should not only repent inwardly of the transgression, but show our repentance externally by asking and doing some penance for it. In this way, though one fails sometimes in keeping the rules, that infraction is made whole and atoned for by the penance, and the rules remain in their integrity, vigor, and observance, as though they had never been broken. Doctors of law and theologians also say that the law then remains in its force and vigor, *in viridi observantia*—green, fresh, and entire observance, as though it had just been made—when whoever breaks it is punished. For the law to be in full force and observance, it is not necessary that it should never be broken by its subjects; it is enough that account be taken of such infraction, and the offender be chastised and punished. But when the law is broken out and out, and no one is punished or checked for that, then they say it is a sign that that law is not in observance, nor has the force of law, being derogated from and abrogated *per non usum,* by disuse and practice to the contrary. We may say the same of our rules. When in an order there is such care taken that, no sooner is the fault committed and the rule broken, than penance comes atop of it, then the observance of rules flourishes. But when on the one side rules are broken and many offenses committed against them, and on the other we see that no penances are asked or performed on that score, then we may well say with truth that the rules are not kept, since now they are broken so freely and so recklessly that nobody minds, no punishment is inflicted, and no account taken. Tomorrow you will say that this observance no longer has the force of a rule, since contrary usage has abolished it, and under the eyes and with the knowledge of superiors the rule is broken, and no penance done for it. Hence it is that superiors, who are bound to see to it that the rules remain in force and are observed, and watch as sentries and guards over the order, are obliged to give penances for breaches of observance. When the superior gives you a penance and a scolding, it is not because he has any spite against you, or because he esteems you less. He knows that we are men, and that there is nothing to be surprised at in a rule's being let slip here and there; he does it to fulfil his duty, which obliges him to stand up for the rules. If when they are broken, he were to pass the matter over and take no notice of what he sees going on, nor give any penance, that would be showing that he sets no store by rules and has no objection to their being broken; thus little by little the use and practice of them falls into neglect, and religious discipline is weakened and relaxed. It is this, says St. Bonaventure, that makes the difference between orders observant and reformed, and lax orders—not that in the latter wrong things are done, and in the former not; that is impossible, for *we all offend in many things* (James iii. 2); but that in observant and reformed orders he who breaks the rule is rebuked and punished, and not in the others.

Now in what the superior does under the obligation that he has by virtue of the office that he holds, our Father wishes all to help him to do it. So he says sometimes in the year to give them penances for their failure to observe the rules. It would be putting the superior to too much trouble to expect him to act the constable on duty over every individual, giving him a penance for every rule he broke. That would be impossible; and even if it could be done, it would not be in accordance with the gentle system of government usual in the Society. It is you that should take upon yourself this care, and be the first to tell your fault to the superior and ask for penance. You should not let your superior come to know your fault for the first time by the report of another about you; this is your affair, and you have more to gain by it than anyone. And the reason should be much considered which our Father assigns in the same rule: "That hereby may be shown the care which each one has of advancing in the service of God." Thus a man's being careful, when he fails in a rule, to go and ask a penance for it, shows that he is careful of his spiritual advancement; while one who breaks rules and commits many faults against them, and never takes the trouble to ask a penance for it, shows that he has little care of his advancement. When this practice prevails in a house, and there are many penances and mortifications, we may say that the house is going on very well in great fervor, and all are greatly edified and animated to good thereby.

This, then, is the second means, which we give now, and it is very easy. I do not say that we should commit no faults against the rules. For that, it would be needful that we should be no longer men, but angels; we shall often fail in them, and who is there, however just he be, who escapes venial faults and sins? *There is no man that sinneth not* (III Kings viii. 46). When, then, you fail, show some sense of what you have done; let it be seen that you are a religious, that you value and appreciate the rules and have a habitual desire to keep them. Let them see you at once telling your fault, for by this trifling penance that you do you repair the breakage of the rule. You even gain more than you have lost; and the devil shall have no cause to plume himself on the fault he has made you commit, but shall be angry and confounded at the ample satisfaction that you have made for it. So the devil himself confessed to St. Dominic much against his will, when the saint took him through all the rooms of the monastery, and made him tell him how he tempted his religious in each. Coming to the chapter room, which is the place where they tell their faults and receive rebukes and penances, "Here," said the devil, "I lose all I gain in the parlor, in the refectory, and in all other places." And not only before God, but also before men, atonement is made and the breakage of the rule repaired by these penances. Have you neglected to ring the bell, or to answer punctually some call of obedience? Have you committed a public fault which all have seen? By a public penance that breakage will be repaired, by your at least telling your fault. But if they see the fault, and see no penance done for it, they may reasonably say that in this house no account is taken of exact observance, but that things are done in a free and easy style.

But it must be observed here that, though it is true that it is more usual in the Society to ask for penances than to give them, and so it is right that it always should be; yet it would not be well for the second manner of doing penance, which the rule mentions, to be forgotten, which is "when the superior obliges you to them for the same end." From forgetfulness of that, penances given by the superior would be rendered difficult, and some would come to resent inordinately having such penances given them. That would be notably prejudicial to religious discipline, and cause great disedification. So we must not give entrance to this abuse in any way; but let the usage of penances' being given by the superior go on, and be practised generally upon all, for there is always room for it. And even were there not, our Father says that all should be ready to accept and accomplish with a good will all penances imposed upon them, even though given without any fault for which they were to blame. Hereby a better display is made of virtue and humility and desire of improvement, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Peter: *What thanks are due to you for suffering chastisement when you sin? But when in doing right you suffer it patiently, that is pleasing in the eyes of God* (I Pet. ii. 20). Many thanks, or few thanks rather, are yours, when you commit a fault and, there being good reason to blame you, you then take rebuke and penance patiently. But when you have done nothing to deserve it, and still they rebuke you and give you a penance as though you were in fault, and you take it patiently and in an edifying way, that is a thing of high estimation.

That will also be a help to keeping the rules which the last rule of the Summary and the last of the Common Rules prescribe, namely, to know them and understand them. So it is ordered that all should take and read them, or hear them read, every month. Some are not content with hearing the rules read in the refectory, but along with the spiritual reading that they practise they read three or four rules every day, and so go through them all every month leisurely and with reflection. This is a good practice, and makes good spiritual reading. It will also be a great help to make the particular examen on the observance of rules, not taking them all together but each taking that rule on which he finds himself most apt to fail, and after that, another, and at other times on the rules of his office, and it will be a very profitable examen.

TWENTY-THIRD TREATISE

ON THE MANIFESTATION OF CONSCIENCE

The reader's attention is called to the new Code of Canon Law, Canon 30, which affects this Treatise considerably.

CHAPTER I

How Important and Necessary It Is to Deal Openly with Our Superiors

CASSIAN tells of the ancient Fathers that to newcomers, who entered among them to serve God, they proposed it as the first letter of the A B C's, that all their temptations and evil thoughts, and all that passed in their soul, they should lay bare at once to their elders and masters, and this ranked as a first principle among them. The blessed St. Anthony used to say: "So far as is possible, a religious should not take a step, or turn from side to side, without giving an account thereof to the superior, even to the extent of declaring how many cups of water he drinks a day, that all may be reduced to the level of obedience." St. John Climacus says that he found in a monastery of great holiness many monks who carried a little book hanging from their girdle, in which they wrote every day all their thoughts to give an account of them to their pastor, and he says that such was the command of their superior. The same instruction is set down expressly by Saints Basil, Jerome, Ambrose, and Bernard.

This, then, which was the common teaching of the saints, and a first principle among those ancient Fathers, is enjoined upon us by our Father, as a thing most important and necessary, in very grave words, which are found in his Constitutions. "Having thought and considered and commended the matter earnestly to God, it has seemed to us, in reverent waiting upon His Divine Majesty, highly proper for subjects to make themselves entirely known to their superiors." Our Father is not wont to speak in this manner of other things, even though they be of great importance; and not content with this manner of speaking, he sets to work to prove it by very efficacious reasons.

The first reason for this importance and necessity of openness with superiors is that so they may be better able to govern and direct their subjects. The superior is bound to guide and direct them; that is his office, that is the meaning of being Rector or superior. But if he does not know you, and you do not declare yourself to him, it is plain that he cannot do so. *He that hideth his crimes, shall not be set right,* says the Wise Man (Prov. xxviii. 13). If the sick man does not discover to the physician his ailment, the physician cannot cure him; for as St. Jerome says: "Medicine cures not what it knows not"—*Quod ignorat medicina non sanat.* You needs must declare your infirmity to the physician if you want him to cure you. And if you have many weaknesses and infirmities, you must declare them all. If you hide any, it may be that he will give you a remedy that will do more harm to the ailment that you have said nothing about than good to the ailment that you have declared. What is good for the liver, is bad for the spleen. So you must needs declare everything, that he may so temper the medicine in one respect as not to do harm in the other. In the same manner and for the same reason you must declare to the spiritual physician, that is, to the superior, all your ailments and weaknesses. When the physician knows his patient well, knows all his weak points and understands well his constitution, then he has gone a long way toward curing him. He lights at once on the radical cause of the illness, diagnoses the peccant humor, can tell what may do the patient good or harm, and so easily applies the proper remedy. For this reason princes and great lords carry physicians in their train, who go with them and stand by at their meals; not that the physician is to keep saying to them every moment: "Don't eat that," "Don't drink so much," for that would be to worry them and make himself a nuisance; but that, seeing them eat and seeing their exercises and what they like most, and what usually does them harm or good, their medical adviser may thoroughly understand their constitution, and when they do get ill, may know how to treat them and apply remedies to better effect. This, then, is the comfort which our Father wishes us to have, physicians ever at our side, well acquainted with our constitution and inclinations, our weakness or strength, that so they may better know how to treat and govern us. The government of the Society is spiritual and interior. It does not take the road of punishment, and therefore it does not ordinarily proceed by the juridical method of informations and denunciations; its sole aim is the due treatment and improvement of your soul. To that end it is necessary that you should manifest and discover yourself to your superior as to a physician and father holding the place of God. If you do not do that, it will be putting yourself in danger and tempting God, Whose purpose it is to rule and govern you through men; and they cannot well govern you if you do not declare yourself to them, since they do not know you.

The second reason, which is an enlargement of the preceding, is this, that the more superiors are conversant with all the facts, interior and exterior, regarding their subjects, with so much the greater care and love will they be able to help their souls, and keep them out of sundry untoward situations and dangers into which they might fall by their being appointed to this or that post or put in this or that occasion of sin, all through their superior's not knowing their temptations and evil inclinations, and their small and insufficient stock of virtue. In the Society especially we must be ever ready, according to our profession and institute, to range about different quarters of the world every time we receive orders to that effect from the sovereign pontiff or our immediate superior. And that such missions may be ordered on a sure footing, sending some and not others, sending some on one errand and others on another, our Father says: "It is not only very, but extremely, important" for the superior to have entire knowledge of the inclinations and temptations of his subjects and of the defects and sins to which they are most inclined, that thereby he may better guide and direct them, not putting on anyone a burden beyond his strength, nor exposing them to greater dangers and hardships than what they are severally able well to bear." One of the things that renders the government of the Society easy, sweet, and well assured, is this openness on the part of subjects and the knowledge that superiors have of each individual, his talents, parts, and capacities for good and evil, what he is made for and for what not, since in this way they know what to make of everyone and what they can put him to. Thus they will not order you anything beyond your spiritual or corporal strength, nor put you in danger, but dispose of everyone according to his strength and talents—*to everyone according to his proper ability,* as the Gospel says (Matt. xxv. 15).

Thirdly, says our Father, this is very important as a means to enable the superior better to order and promote what is fitting for the whole body of the Society, to the good and honor of which, along with yours, he is bound to look. When you manifest yourself to him and give him an entire account of your soul, then the superior, while having entire regard to your honor and without inflicting any stigma upon you, may at the same time look to the general good of the whole body of the Society. But if you do not declare yourself clearly to him, possibly you may endanger your honor and your soul, as well as the honor of your order, which depends on yours.

By the way, it will be well for us to consider and reflect upon the means which the Society affords us for our own improvement, how excellently well they fit in with the end of the Society. If by our institute we were shut up in our cells, going only to choir and refectory, there would be no need for such openness with superiors, nor for so many accounts of conscience. But in the Society, where subjects are and have to be thrown into such strange situations, and so much confidence has to be reposed in them, sending them throughout the world among believers and unbelievers, and sometimes alone, and that for a considerable time, the superior needs to know well each man's interior, that he may not endanger him and the Society in his person. And for the individual himself it is of much importance to make a clean breast of everything to his superior for the discharge and security of his conscience, otherwise all these dangers will come upon him; whereas, if he will but declare to the superior his weakness and the smallness of his spiritual strength, they will not expose him to these dangerous occasions.

Plutarch alleges a similitude which well illustrates this. The poor who wish to appear rich impoverish themselves the more and in the end come to ruin, wanting to appear richer, wishing as rich men to spend more than their purses will allow. In the same way if a religious is poor in virtue, but for want of humility is anxious to disguise his poverty and appear rich and fraught with what he has not, he will impoverish himself the more and possibly will end in ruin, because they will deal with him as with one rich and advanced in the virtue and put him in dangerous occasions which he has not the funds nor the virtue to meet; all this will come upon him because he has not declared himself. Thus, though it were only for our own satisfaction and security and the freedom of our own conscience, and the avoidance of scruples, and a happy deliverance from dangers coming upon us—as also to have God more bound to us, to help us and bring us safe out of those dangerous occasions—we should give this clear account of our conscience to our superior. Oh, the content and satisfaction that a religious enjoys who has been thoroughly open with his superior, and manifested all his miseries and imperfections, when afterwards they send him on a mission or put him in office! Oh, the confidence he has in God, that He will stand by him and deliver him from shame in the dangerous occasions that he meets withal! "Lord, I did not put myself in this office, nor in this post; rather I exposed my insufficiency and the little spiritual strength I had to qualify me for it. It is Thou, O Lord, Who hast put me here and commanded me; do Thou supply what is wanting to me." With what confidence does he repeat the saying of St. Augustine: "Lord, give me what Thou commandest, and command what Thou pleasest"—*Da quod iubes, et iube quod vis!* It seems to him as though he had God thereby pledged to give him what He commands.

But as for that other man, who has not given a clear account of himself, but for fear lest they might put him in this place or move him from that other place which he likes, has failed to manifest some temptation, or passion, or imperfection, or weakness of his, what comfort can he find? God has not sent him to that station, nor has obedience put him there, for ignorance, as philosophers say, causes involuntariness. It is not the will of the superior, but he of his own self-will intrudes and pushes himself into office; he is an intruder, not one called or sent. Of such that may well be said which God says by Jeremy (xxiii. 21) : *I did not send them, they thrust themselves in: I never spoke to them, and they gave themselves out for prophets.* With such persons as these, is it wonderful that much is wanting to them and that they do not succeed well? They have reason to fear and lead unhappy lives. Let such folk take good notice that they will not satisfy their conscience by begging the superior not to put them in such an occupation or occasion because they do not feel the virtue or strength required for it, but the reason why must be declared more in particular, as we shall say afterwards; as for all the rest, the superior puts it down to humility, and the greatest saints are wont to speak in that strain.

For these reasons, then, our Father so much commends this practice to us, and speaks of it again and again in his Constitutions, as of a thing that has a great bearing on the welfare of the whole Society. So full is our Father of this sentiment that in the Fourth Part of the Constitutions, dealing with the injunction that no one is to keep anything, door or box, locked, he adds "nor his own conscience either," though this remark does not seem to be to the purpose there; such is the deep feeling of regard that he has of it. And he does the same in the Sixth Part, where he says: "Let them hide nothing from the superior either of their outward action or their inward thought." He takes this to be so necessary in the Society that at all times, *in season and out of season,* as the Apostle says (II Tim. iv. 2), he seems to remind us of it.

In the Fifth General Congregation, the question being raised: "What are the substantial points of our institute?" it was said that they are those which are set forth in the formula or rule of our institute given by Julius III and approved and confirmed by his successors, as also all those provisions without which the former could not stand, or could only hardly stand, and one of these they said is that of rendering an account of conscience. Thus it is a substantial point, so much so that without it the Society could not be maintained; in saying this we say all that can be said. Even in other religious orders this practice has been observed; and some historians have remarked that so long as there existed in them this holy custom of having recourse with all their troubles to their superiors and spiritual fathers, and discovering their whole soul to them, they persevered in great fervor. And, contrariwise, experience shows that this is apt to be the common way whereby a religious comes to ruin and fall from his vocation. He begins little by little to allow tepidity and passion and evil inclination to arise, and to fail in his spiritual duties, and to fall into one fault after another. Meanwhile he takes care to cover up his imperfection, and give no account of his infirmity; and in this way he goes on inflaming his wound and making it a running sore. So what was a little thing becomes great, and in the end almost incurable, till his whole spiritual edifice comes crashing down because there was much silent decay going on in it without any remedy's being applied. St. Dorotheus notes this well in these words: "Some say that this or that was the reason why this man fell, and this other left religion. Sickness, they say, threw him out, or his parents induced him to leave the order; but I say, neither this nor that was the cause, but it was because he had barred his breast from the beginning, and would not give an account of the things that were happening in his soul."

CHAPTER II

What a Great Relief and Consolation It Is for a Man to Be Open with His Superior and Spiritual Father, and the Blessings and Benefits That Ensue Therefrom

THE saints and doctors of the Church, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Bernard, say that one of the greatest comforts that a man can have in this life is to have a faithful friend whom he can lean upon, discovering to him all his heart and its secrets, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *A faithful friend is a medicine for life* (Ecclus. vi. 16). There is no medicine so effectual for the cure of wounds, says St. Augustine, as a friend who can comfort you in your afflictions, counsel you in your doubts, rejoice with you in your adversities. *He who hath found such a friend hath found a treasure.* Treasure, do I say? *There is nothing to be compared to a faithful friend* (Ecclus. vi. 14-15). All the silver and gold that the Indies yield, and all the world rejoices in, is not worth so much as such a friend. Now this is the blessing that the Lord has given us in the Society, that you have such a friend, you must understand, in your superior, who is your spiritual father, your master, your physician, your mother and brother, and has more than a mother's feelings for you, and will take your interests for his own and more than his own. Know, then, how to profit by such a friend, and open your heart to him with great confidence. If you find such a friend, says the Wise Man, have recourse to him; *let thy foot wear out the steps of his door* (Ecclus. vi. 36); frequent his room, consulting him and imparting all your concerns to him, since in him you will find comfort, counsel, and remedy for all your needs. As to the sick man it is a relief and comfort to declare himself to the doctor who is to attend him, so to the man in affliction and distress it is a great relief and comfort to declare and manifest his pains and afflictions to one who can console and aid him.

One of the means that philosophers prescribe for casting out sadness and relieving the afflicted heart, is to relate and declare one's troubles to another. St. Thomas mentions it, treating of sadness, and gives this reason for it. When a person chooses to endure his troubles all by himself alone, they draw his attention and thoughts more to them, and so afflict him more; but when they are imparted to another, the sufferer is somewhat diverted therefrom because his attention is distracted and his heart dilated and relieved. So we see by experience, and it is a common saying among men: "Pardon me, sir, because it is a relief to me to recount my troubles." The holy Abbot Nilus, a disciple of St. John Chrysostom, says that this was a common means prescribed by the holy Fathers for this purpose. They illustrated it by a good comparison. Have you not seen how dark and gloomy the clouds look when they are charged with a quantity of water, but, as they proceed to discharge it and get relieved of their burden, they become bright and resplendent? Thus, while a man is burdened and shut up with his temptations, he lives in great sadness and perplexity, very heavy and melancholy; but when he casts off from himself this burden by discovering and manifesting himself to the superior, his heart is relieved, his sadness assuaged, he is cheered up and comforted, and straightway he comes to enjoy great peace and satisfaction of heart.

St. Dorotheus relates of himself that he felt so peaceful and happy upon discovering and manifesting all his doings to his master and spiritual father, that he became afraid and had his suspicions as to whether he was going on well, and felt indignation against himself, saying that afflictions are foretold as the lot of such as are on the way to heaven: *for by many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God* (Acts xiv. 20). And when he saw that he felt no affliction, but great satisfaction and comfort, these fears came over him as to whether he was on the right road to heaven. This went on until his master, the Abbot John, told him not to trouble about that, for this peace and contentment which he felt was promised to those who opened their conscience as he did. And let it be observed that this openness must be not only in the matter of temptations and imperfections, but also in things that of themselves are good and quite spiritual, as we shall presently explain and have already said before.

On account of the great importance of this practice our Father enjoins it so earnestly, and would have superiors talk and converse frequently with their subjects; as well for other advantages that there are in their doing so, as also because by this private and familiar intercourse subjects are greatly encouraged to have recourse to their superiors and explain themselves clearly to them. And for the more abundant help and great consolation of all, he orders in his Constitutions that there be in every house and college a prefect of spiritual things, to whom all can have recourse to gain relief and consolation by talking to him, and to be directed and aided in the affairs of their souls.

Cassian says very well of all human methods and all mechanical arts, which serve for temporal advantages only, that, though they be material and can be seen with the eyes and felt with the hands, nevertheless they cannot be learned or well known unless one serves an apprenticeship and puts oneself under a master who can teach them. What sensible man, then, can think that for this science of your spiritual advancement alone you need have no master to teach you and tell you how to behave, it being a matter so hidden and spiritual and invisible that not only the eyes of the body cannot see it, but not those of the soul either, except where there is great purity of heart. And this is not like other sciences, where a mistake involves temporal loss, which can easily be repaired; there is question here of the losing or saving of the soul forever. We are not fighting here against visible enemies, but against invisible; and not against one or two, but against countless troops of devils, making war upon us night and day. It is necessary, therefore, says Cassian, to have very diligent recourse to our elders and spiritual fathers, declaring to them all that passes in our soul, to be directed and helped by them.

Apart from other reasons, the great fruit and profit that ensues from having in every house a prefect of spiritual things and having recourse to him is clearly seen from the things that are treated of and laid before him, which are to give an account of how one gets on at meditation, what method one follows therein, what fruit one gathers, whether one observes the additions and recommendations that we have for making it, what is the subject of our particular examen and whether we mark it and compare results, whether we make spiritual reading and how we profit by it, whether we have any temptations and how we behave under them, what penances and mortifications we practise, as well private as public, how we are in the matter of obedience, of indifference, in humility, in observance of rules, and other like things. Now whoever knows that he has to give an account of all that, evidently will be helped to take a little more care, to be able to give a better account. Moreover, there is no doubt but that to see that much importance is attached to a thing, and great account taken of it, is a great means to make us also regard it and attach importance to it. Seeing that they ask me these things again and again clearly obliges me to take more care of them; and if I fail once, to take care not to fail a second time.

As theologians and saints say, sacramental confession is a great bridle to restrain men from sin. So it was shown by the experience of the heretics in Germany who had denied and abandoned it. Things went so far that they found their towns full of vices and deeds of violence. No man was sure of his neighbor; and these very heretics sent a petition to the Emperor Charles V, begging him to make a law ordering all to go to confession, seeing that, since confession had been abolished, they could not live or get on with one another. Thereat the emperor laughed not a little, as if it had been in his power to make a law to that effect. Now, as it goes a long way to restrain a man from committing sin, to know that he has to confess it, so it also greatly restrains a man from committing faults and imperfections, to see that he has to give an account of them. And to push the comparison further, frequent confession is one of the chief means that we can give to a person for his salvation; for besides the grace and forgiveness of sins that is given in that sacrament, there are therein contained all the remedies and counsels that can possibly be given. Thus, when we wish anyone there in the world to make great progress, we give him some advice: at one time, to recite the rosary; at another, to hear Mass daily if he can; at another, to hear sermons; at another, to make examen of conscience; at another, to do some penances, and never to let a day pass without doing some penance; but finally, to put the seal on all, we give him for a remedy, to confess frequently to a good confessor; and therein we think we are giving him all remedies in one, and saying all that can be said and all that need be said. For if he does that, the confessor will give him every week or every fortnight or every month the means and remedies that you cannot give, nor he take all at once. The confessor will ask him an account of how he puts into execution the counsels that have been given him. This is what good confessors should do; they should take care that their penitents go on always advancing in virtue. To this end masters of spiritual life advise penitents that everyone should have a fixed confessor; for to confess today to one and tomorrow to another is a likely way of making little progress, since no one takes such a casual comer expressly under his charge or regards him as any son of his. In the same way, in this practice of giving an account of conscience there are included all the particular means and remedies that can be given to anyone for his spiritual progress: for hereby the superior or spiritual father sees what profit you are making out of meditation, examens, and spiritual reading; hereby he sees how you are overcoming temptations and inclinations and the infirmity of nature; hereby he sees how you are in point of silence, humility, indifference, and resignation, and whether you are advancing or falling away; hereby there is given you the particular remedy and advice that you have need of according to your necessity and disposition, correcting you on one point, encouraging you on another. And this being done with the gentleness and charity with which it ought to be done, and by the bounty of the Lord is done in the Society, so that you understand that the only object desired and aimed at is your greater good and spiritual improvement, this means cannot fail of being of great effect and efficacy.

CHAPTER III

That to Discover Temptations to the Superior or Spiritual Father Is a Very Efficacious Means to Take against Them

IT is the common doctrine of the saints and a first principle with those ancient Fathers, as we have said, that all temptations should be discovered and manifested straightway to our elders and masters, and our Father admonishes us of this in the Constitutions. But let us see what is the reason of this strong recommendation, for that will be very useful to the purpose of imprinting this truth on our hearts. The reason of it, says Cassian, is that in this way the devil will not be able to deceive you by his artifices and temptations, as he might deceive a newcomer, since you bear arms put in your hands by your veteran teacher. He will not deceive you, as he might an ignorant and inexperienced person, if you have recourse at once to your spiritual father, a learned and experienced man, and let yourself be guided by what he tells you. Then the devil has not to fight with a new soldier and raw recruit, but with a veteran well versed in this spiritual warfare. All the science and all the experience of your confessor and director you make yours when you open yourself at once to him and are guided by what he tells you.

In this way, Cassian says, there is gained true prudence and discretion, a virtue so great and so much praised by the blessed St. Anthony. Those holy monks once met in collation and spiritual conference, and began to confer and discuss among themselves what virtue was most helpful to perfection. One said it was chastity because thereby a man keeps sensuality subject to reason; another said it was abstinence, whereby a man is master of himself; another that it was justice, and so each one said what he thought. St. Anthony, having heard them all and made up his mind what to hold, said: "The virtue most necessary, and most helpful for perfection, is prudence and discretion; since no exercises of virtue, unless they are done with that, are pleasing to God, or are acts of virtue at all." Then you ask, says Cassian, what is the easiest and shortest way to attain this virtue. Set down and communicate all your doings to the superior and be guided by his word and counsel, and in this way you will attain it, and make the prudence and discretion of the superior your own. St. Bernard says the same, speaking of this virtue: "Since the virtue of discretion is a very rare thing—*rara avis in terris*—contrive to supply the lack of it by the virtue of obedience, so as to do nothing, either more or less, or in any other way, than as obedience shall prescribe." In this way, he says, the lack of discretion and experience is made up and remedied, and true prudence is gained.

For this reason the saints so strongly recommend us to reveal our temptations straightway, and for the same reason the devil uses the utmost diligence in trying to get us not to reveal them, for he has another end in view to the contrary, which is our ruin and damnation. St. Dorotheus says that there is nothing that gives the devil so much pleasure as to find a man who will not disclose his temptations and thoughts to his superior; such a one he reckons that he is sure to overcome, because the man fights against him single-handed. *Woe to him that is alone* (Eccles. iv. 10), because he has none to help him against a fall or to lend him a hand to rise again. Contrariwise, there is nothing that the devil more dreads or that puts him out more than to be discovered, for with that he loses all hope of victory, is disheartened, and takes to flight.

Our Father well illustrates this in the Book of the Exercises by a comparison, which, as he alleges it, we may well allege. He says that our enemy the devil, in tempting us, takes the same line as a man with a wicked passion does in making his advances to solicit a young girl of honorable parentage, or the wife of a good husband who is jealous of her honor. In seeking to ensnare her, the first thing that he does is very diligently to try to keep the thing secret; and there is nothing he resents or dreads so much as the girl going to tell her father what is going on, or the wife her husband, because upon that he at once gives himself up to despair and loses all hope of gaining his end; but so long as it is kept secret, he has some hope of success. In the same way, says our Father, when the devil is seeking to ensnare a soul, his first object is with all diligence to secure that the matter be kept secret, and that the temptations and reasons alleged in their support be revealed to none, because, once that is assured, he feels certain of victory and the attainment of his purpose. And on the other hand there is nothing that he resents so much as his intended victim's going and disclosing and manifesting these proceedings to his confessor or superior. As the devil has more power and more success by strategem than by force, when he sees himself discovered, he gives himself up for beaten, and all his frauds and entanglements are confounded. Such is the way with all deceivers, as the Gospel text has it. *He that worketh evil, hateth the light* (John iii. 20).

St. Dorotheus relates to this effect what befell St. Macarius. He says that the great Macarius, a disciple of St. Anthony, one day met the devil, and asked him how he was getting on with his monks. "Very badly," he replied, "because no sooner does a thought come into their minds than off they go and discover it to their superior. But," he added, "there is one who is a great friend of mine. I hold him in my hand, and do with him what I like, and spin him round and round like a top;" and he mentioned his name. On hearing this, St. Macarius went to see that monk, and found that he was making this mistake, that he never related his temptations to his spiritual father, nor got guidance from him. The saint exhorted him to unbosom himself, and henceforth never to trust any more in his own judgment. The advice was well taken, and so the evil was remedied. St. Macarius caught sight of the devil again another time, and asked him how things were going with his friend the monk. The devil answered in a great rage: "He is no more my friend, but my enemy." St. Dorotheus here remarks very well that all St. Macarius' monks were tempted by the devil, but the others he could not overcome, on account of their at once giving a clear account to their spiritual father of all that passed in their soul, and being guided by him. This one alone was overcome and led astray by the devil, who trusted in his own judgment and guided himself by his own lights, refusing to declare and manifest himself to his superior and spiritual father. And he was also cured as soon as he manifested himself. Cassian says that he cannot be deceived who manifests and declares himself entirely to his spiritual father, and quotes in confirmation what the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Man: *If thou discoverest and layest bare his disguises and artifices,* that is, his secret and hidden temptations, *he shall not deceive thee, nor carry thee away* (Ecclus. xxvii. 19). *God deliver thee from the serpent that biteth secretly* (x. 11). When the serpent or viper plays the rattlesnake, and comes hissing and making a noise, and the snake charmer hears him, there is a remedy. In the same way God keeps you from the devil, the old serpent, who bites when he is alone in silence; but when your spiritual director hears him, who can charm him with verses of Holy Writ, there is a remedy at hand.

A further point to note in this matter is the high value that God sets on the humility that is shown in having recourse to the superior or spiritual father, and opening your heart to him. So pleasing is this humility to God that often the temptation is put an end to by the mere revealing of it, without observing the remedy, and even though the superior does not mention any remedy and makes no reply. So says Cassian: "The temptation lasts no longer than while it is kept covered up in the heart; uncover and reveal it, and at once it disappears; even before the superior has given his answer, it is already gone; as the snake lurking in a dark hole or under a stone makes off at once when it is discovered." Lift up a stone, and you will see how the toads, adders, and lizards that were there make off and cannot suffer the light; so the devil, the old serpent, says Cassian, makes off at once when he is discovered, because he is the father of darkness and cannot endure the light. The devil, being so proud, greatly resents the discovery of his petty and base arts; he is too proud to stand it, and so flies away at once when he sees himself discovered.

Let us set ourselves here to consider and reflect if for bodily ailments there were physicians who could cure them by merely having them made known to them, what a boon we should take that to be. But what in the treatment of bodies is impossible, is witnessed by daily experience in the life of the soul; by the mere declaration of temptations to the superior, they are often gone before he has given any answer. Even further, I say, by the mere resolve to tell the thing to the superior or spiritual father, the temptation often comes to an end and vanishes. You were going to tell it him; and before you reached his door, God had scattered all that cloud, and delivered you from the temptation and trouble that was on you. We have an example of this in the Lives of the Fathers of Egypt. They tell of one who had fasted sixty weeks and prayed continually that God would declare to him the solution of a certain doubt he had; and as all that time he could not come by it, he resolved to go to another monk, who dwelt in the same desert, and lay it before him; and as he went out of his cell for that purpose, he found on the spot an angel, who gave him the solution of his doubt, telling him at the same time that by that act of humility he had merited to have his doubt cleared up more than by all the praying and fasting that he had done. In the holy Gospel we have also a good example of this in the ten lepers that came to meet Christ our Redeemer on His way to Jerusalem, crying out: *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us* (Luke xvii. 13). He bade them go and show themselves to the priests. And the holy Gospel says: *While they were on the way,* before they arrived there, *they were cured.* God takes such satisfaction in our humbling ourselves, and subjecting ourselves to the men whom He has put in His place, that He will confirm it by miracles to show how pleased He is. Often by merely threatening the devil to discover him, he takes fright, and leaves you and makes off. So it is a good thing here to do what children do, who, when anyone annoys them, threaten that they will tell their father.

CHAPTER IV

That No One Ought to Omit Telling His Temptations to His Spiritual Father on the Plea That He Already Knows the Means to Be Taken to Meet Them

ONE may say: "I have already many times heard of the means to meet temptations, and from what I have seen and read in spiritual books I know what answer the superior or spiritual father can give me; why should I have recourse to him?" We have good reason to fear lest this temptation may come upon us here, all the more in the case where a man thinks that he is already well advanced in this science. St. Dorotheus was much harassed with this temptation, but he knew well how to deal with it. He relates how, when he was going to manifest his temptation to his superior, the thought at once occurred to him: "Why throw away time to no purpose? He can only answer you this or that. You know it already; it is not worth while going to trouble the superior." And I, he says, waxed indignant at the temptation and at the uprising of my own judgment and opinion, and I said: "Avaunt thee, Satan, excommunication, anathema, and curses be upon thee!" So I took no notice of the temptation, but went to my superior and told him all that was going on; and when the superior happened to give me the answer that had occurred to myself, and a sudden disturbing thought came over me: "Did I not tell you that such would be his answer, and that there was no need of going to him?" to that I answered to the contrary: "Now it is a good remedy, now it is of the Holy Ghost; when it came from you, it was suspect, and I could not feel sure of it." In this way St. Dorotheus rejected the temptation and never gave it entrance, but carried the whole matter to his superior. So we should act, giving no credit to our own judgment, and not trusting it; for it is the common opinion of wise and holy men that no man is a judge in his own cause. And if that is true where there is no question of temptations, how much more where there is? For temptations blind the eyes of the soul and hinder her from seeing the right thing, according to that saying of the prophet: *My sins have overtaken me, and the light is gone out from mine eyes* (Psalm xxxix. 13). In such a moment the man does not know the remedy that suits him; and if he knows it speculatively, he does not succeed in making a good use of it or putting it in practice, because he is dazed and troubled by the temptation and passion; and God will help him more by one word of the superior than by all the knowledge that he possesses.

St. Augustine tells a witty story which is pat to our purpose. He says that a certain sick man called in the doctor, who saw him and applied a remedy by which he at once got better. It happened, some days after, that the same attack came back upon him; and as the remedy that he had applied on the former occasion had succeeded so well, he took no thought of the doctor, but took the same remedy, which he remembered right well; but though he took it, he felt none the better for it. He wondered at that, and sent to call in the doctor, and told him what had happened, and asked him why it was that, having taken the same medicine, he felt none the better for it. The doctor gave him this witty and acute answer: "Sir, the reason why this medicine has done you no good this time, is because I did not give it you myself." Now, we may apply the same saying to our purpose. This remedy that you know and have heard of many times, will do you no good because your superior or confessor has not given it you, he being your spiritual physician. Medicine has quite a different force and efficacy when it is given by the hand of the physician, who knows the exact situation and circumstances; so it is also with spiritual medicines and remedies. Good were the waters of the rivers of Damascus, and better than those of Jordan; but they did not avail to drive away Naaman's leprosy, but only those in which the Prophet Eliseus had bidden him wash (IV Kings v. 10). God co-operates with the words which the superior says to you, and with the means that he prescribes, because he is in His place; so an easy and common remedy, given by the hand of the superior, will do you more good than all you know, although you know much more than he.

CHAPTER V

That None Should Omit Manifesting Things because They Look Trifling

THERE is another ground which the devil is wont to allege, to hinder some people from having recourse to their superior, which is telling them that there is nothing in it, and that there is no need for having recourse to the superior about childish trifles, and that you should be ashamed to go to him over such a little bit of a thing as that. To this I say, in the first place, that anyone aiming at perfection should not wait for a thing to be grave, or a matter of necessity and obligation, but should always strive after that which is better and more perfect; so of anything, however small it be, he should take account and report it to the superior, for that is the meaning of aiming at perfection. Now, one of the things that gives great edification is having recourse to the superior on very minute grounds; and the more ancient and learned a man is, the greater the edification, because this is making oneself a child and a little one for Christ.

In the second place, I say that sometimes the thing is not so small as one thinks. It is the shame and repugnance that you feel to mention it that cause you to go in quest of reasons to make light of it, and persuade yourself that it is of no consequence, that so you may not tell it. So it often happens in confession, when one is ashamed to tell a piece of vulgarity and a mere nothing. At once the devil comes in, availing himself of this natural shame and repugnance that you feel, and persuading you that this is no sin, or at least, no mortal sin, and that you are not bound to confess it. Oh, how many has the devil deceived in this way, and made them omit to confess necessary matter, and so come to make bad confessions and Communions! The mere feeling of repugnance and difficulty in disclosing and manifesting a thing to the superior ought to be enough to arouse your suspicions, and make you understand that it is proper to tell it. So Cassian says that this is one of the clearest signs by which you can understand that a thing is bad and a temptation of the devil; and he adds that this was the common opinion of the Fathers. When evil is done we at once seek to cover it up. When one is anxious to cloak a thing over, there is grievous suspicion of the business' not being good. *He that doth evil escheweth the light* (John iii. 26).

In the third place, I say that, though the matter be trifling at present, yet a little thing, by being covered up, is apt to become great. So it is well to declare it while it is a little thing, that it may be remedied in time, the remedy then being easy, while afterwards it is apt to become difficult. St. John Climacus says that, as birds' eggs, if covered and warmed under the wings of the mother or under dung, little by little are hatched and come to receive life and produce other birds, so do evil thoughts, when they are hidden in the heart, unrevealed to anyone who can cure them, come to the light and are put in execution.

There is another idea also which the devil is apt to put before some minds, to keep them from having recourse to the superior. It is the idea that they will be burdensome and tire him out with these things; and so, not to be tiresome and burdensome, they omit having recourse to him. This is a great mistake; for this is the office of the superior, and one of the main things that he has to do is this. Thus you do great wrong to your superior in judging that he is bored and annoyed over having to do a thing which is so essential and necessary a part of his office. Rather he rejoices greatly in being occupied with a thing so essential as this, on which the spiritual advancement of his subjects so greatly depends, as we have said above in a similar case.

Cassian tells a story of what happened to Abbot Serapion when he was a youth, and the abbot used often afterwards to relate it to his religious, to encourage them to give an account of all their affairs to the superior. When I was a novice, he said, I was much tempted to gluttony. I seemed never to get enough; and when I had dined with the Abbot Thomas, who was my superior, every day when we arose from table I secreted in the fold of my garment a little loaf, which I ate afterwards in the evening without his knowing. Thus overcome by gluttony, I committed that theft and act of self-indulgence every day; and though, when I had done eating, I was always seized with remorse, so great that the torment and pain of it was considerably greater than the pleasure I had got by eating, nevertheless, he said, the temptation had got such a hold on me that I did the same over again the next day, and stole another little loaf, and ate it secretly, and did not dare to tell this temptation to the superior. This went on till the Lord in His mercy was pleased to deliver me from the servitude and captivity in which I was in the following manner. Some monks happened to come to visit the holy Abbot Thomas, and after dinner they began talking of spiritual things, as their custom was. It happened that the old man, in answer to their inquiries, spoke of the vice of gluttony and of the force that temptations had when they were kept secret. And as I was suffering from great remorse of conscience, I thought that all this was said for my benefit, and that God must have revealed my temptation and fault to the holy abbot. So, struck with terror at the force of his words, I began first of all to weep secretly with myself; then, as the feeling of compunction grew, I could not contain myself any longer, but broke out into loud bursts of weeping and sobbing, and there before the whole company I drew out from my bosom the little loaf that I had stolen and hidden that very day; and, prostrate on the ground, I asked pardon and penance, and publicly declared my temptation and how, overcome by it, I had done that every day. Then the holy old man began to console and encourage me, saying: "Have great confidence, my son, that thy confession, and this so heroic act that thou hast done in manifesting and declaring here publicly before all thy temptation and fault, has delivered thee from this captivity and slavery. Today thou hast overcome the devil, and gained a decisive victory over him who had been victorious over thee. Understand that the Lord permitted thee to be so far captured and subjected by this temptation because thou didst hide it; and hold for certain, now that thou hast manifested it, that the devil will no longer lord it over thee, but that old serpent will be gone at once, being unable to bear the light." Hardly had the holy abbot done saying these words, when there came out, he said, from my bosom something like a flash of lightning or a lighted torch, which filled the whole cell with so abominable and hellish a stench that hardly anyone could stay there. Then the holy old man returned to his subject and said: "Thou seest here, my son, how the Lord has been pleased to show by deed what I have said to thee in word. With thine own eyes thou hast seen the devil come out and fly from thee by virtue of thy confession, since he could not brook the light and the showing up of his intricate and mischievous lies. So have no fear of his daring to attack thee again." And so it was, for from that hour I have never again had that temptation, nor has anything of it ever recurred to my memory.

CHAPTER VI

Some First Answers to the Difficulties That Usually Hinder This Openness in Manifestation

WE have spoken of the importance and necessity of dealing openly with superiors. But the more important a thing is, and the more necessary, and the higher the perfection that it involves, the greater the repugnance apt to arise in our nature, set all awry as that nature is by sin. And the devil, envious of our good, is wont to come in, making difficulties out to be greater than they are, to stop our way. It will be well, then, to satisfy these difficulties. It will be not a little but a great thing done, if in a matter so main and necessary as this we succeed in smoothing the way. Though we are here addressing religious, every Christian may apply the doctrine to himself, since it is a thing that concerns all. So Gerson here addresses all generally, speaking of confession, as we shall presently see.

In the first place, since naturally we like to avoid trouble and difficulty, and what we are now speaking of is apt to present itself to us as a difficult and troublesome business, we will begin with that, showing and proving that a man will suffer incomparably more trouble in keeping his secrets under lock and cover than by discovering and declaring them to the superior. And let this point be noted, because it is a thing that tells strongly against lovers of themselves, who leave undone the works of virtue and perfection on account of the difficulty and trouble they feel in them. I confess that there is some trouble and mortification in discovering to the superior all one's temptations, inclinations, and defects; but I say that a man will carry about him a much greater load of trouble and pain by covering and cloaking these things over than he would have in discovering and manifesting them. Experience shows us this well, and anyone can bear good witness to it whose policy at any time has been to be close and reticent with his superior. Oh, what anxieties, what sudden thrills of remorse, does he suffer whose habit it is to cover and cloak things over! He is ever in the pangs of childbirth, thinking whether he shall speak out or be silent. Now he has a mind to speak, and then he veers round and changes his purpose. Now he gets as far as the superior's door to tell him, and then he turns on his heel, not daring to tell him. *The iniquity of Ephraim is tied up in a sack, his sin is hidden away, the pains of one in childbirth shall come upon him* (Osee xiii. 12). He was on the point of exposing to the light the temptation and evil thought that the devil, father of darkness, had put into his breast, and he had not virtue or strength enough to do it. *The children have come to the point of birth, and there is not strength to bring them forth* (Isaias xxxvii. 3). He remains always in labor; and the longer he delays the discovery, the greater the pains he feels, because he has made it matter of greater difficulty and shame to tell it after all. Now it comes to pain him that he did not reveal it at the beginning, and the greatest difficulty he feels is in this reflection: "How can I go to the superior now after the lapse of so much time? If the thing were just starting, I would tell him; but now with what face can I appear before him? After I have kept myself close from him for so long a time, what will he say? He will say that I had no confidence in him, since I would not tell him of it at the beginning." A man will know no rest or repose so long as he keeps his secret thought barred and covered up. Conscience will be ever tormenting him with remorse and beating him, because he will not do a duty of the first importance; whereas on but discovering and declaring himself, all this tempest will be appeased at once, and he will find himself very peaceful and comfortable.

When one dares not confess a sin for shame, his life is one of perpetual fears and fits of grave uneasiness; but on confessing it he feels as happy and as much relieved as though he had thrown off a great tower that he was carrying on his back. Festering wounds, says St. Gregory, while they are closed, notoriously give greater pain, the purulent matter burning there within; but when they are opened, all that filthy accumulation oozes out, and naturally the pain is appeased. So it is when one confesses his sins and declares his temptations and weaknesses. The confession and manifestation of faults and temptations is like lancing an inflamed wound; or as when the stomach is charged with bad humors or excess of food, and the man goes retching and hiccuping to throw it up, and finds no quiet or repose until he succeeds in throwing it up, but is at once quiet and at ease when he does throw it up. Hence it will clearly be seen how much greater is the pain and torment of keeping one's secret thoughts close and covered up than would be felt in discovering and manifesting them, for all that is involved in doing that is a little shame and mortification that passes away in the time that you could recite a *Credo,* and leaves behind much peace and satisfaction at having made the disclosure. Thus to one who, to escape difficulty and trouble, will not declare himself, we may well reply that just for that very reason he should declare himself. His closeness will bring him in more trouble; he will rot away, gnawed and consumed with pain, whereas in speaking out he will find much peace and tranquillity.

CHAPTER VII

Meeting the Main Difficulty That Is Apt to Stand in the Way of Openness in Manifestation

ONE of the greatest, or the greatest, difficulty that is apt to occur to some in the way of their declaring and discovering their heart to their superior is the thought that they will be dishonored, and lose the good name and credit that possibly they enjoyed with him, and that henceforth he will look upon them with other eyes, and will not trust them nor show them so much love. By this thought the devil deceives many, and makes them not open themselves or not open themselves entirely. Now, if we can show that all this is the other way about, and so much the other way about that by discovering and manifesting oneself one rather gains honor and esteem and more love, and by not declaring themselves people lose all this, I think that this difficulty will be quite smoothed over. So, then, by the grace of the Lord we will show here the truth, and let it be seen that things are just the reverse of what the devil represents them to be to deceive us, according to his ordinary procedure in all temptations, for he is the father of lies.

I say, then, that there is nothing that makes one lose reputation and esteem with a superior more than shrouding oneself up and being shy with him. It gives the superior occasion to begin to take him for a close man and a dissembler. No fault that he could ever reveal of himself could do him so much harm as that, for one fault is one fault, but to take anyone for a close man includes a good deal, since it puts him under suspicion of many faults.

"That is a close man; he never opens his heart. How do I know but that, as he has kept this thing up his sleeve, he will keep another and another thing concealed?" This mere suspicion goes for more than one can say. On the other hand, when a man opens out his whole soul to his superior and declares to him all his temptations, inclinations, and defects, he not only loses nothing, but gains much credit with him, for he takes him for a humble and mortified man, plain and straightforward, in whom there is nothing else within but what he shows without.

We will go on with this topic further down to the root of the matter, for it is one of the principal things to be said on this subject. I say, first of all, that a man cannot take a more effectual means to be cherished and loved by his superior, and gain his good will, than to manifest and discover his whole heart to him without hiding anything. The reason of this is that, as philosophers and saints commonly say, one of the most powerful motives for loving is being loved. The Evangelist St. John brings forward this motive to invite us to love God, *that he hath loved us first* (I John iv. 10). But one of the chief things by which a subject can show that he has a great love for his superior is by discovering his whole heart to him, and all his secrets, great and small. Where the love of two persons goes so far as that, that there is nothing hidden between them, there is there a very great and very close friendship. So said Christ our Redeemer to His disciples: *I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard from my Father I have made known unto you* (John xv. 15). To others I have spoken in parables, but *to you I have given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God* (Luke viii. 10). When, then, a superior sees that someone reveals to him his whole heart, and that nothing is left there untold, he then understands that that person has a true love for him, and takes him for his father, holding the place of God, since he confides his soul and honor to him, and puts everything into his hands. This wins his heart, and obliges him to love that person more and look better after him. But if the superior sees that his subject does not declare himself fully, but speaks with reserve and beats about the bush, dealing in parables that he may not understand the matter as it is, that is sufficient cause for his forming no high opinion of him, and loving him less, because he sees that the other does not love him, nor esteem him, nor take him for a father, nor confide in him, nor dare to reveal himself to him; this naturally causes a coolness in love. How can you expect the superior to love you as a son, if you do not love him as a father? Love him as a father, trust him, deal openly and plainly with him, and he will love you as a son.

The same thing we shall say afterwards, speaking of the relations of superiors to subjects. When the superior speaks to the subject clearly on any point, and says to him: "See, you have this or that fault; there is a hitch there and people complain of you; try to correct yourself on it," that is the procedure of true love. But when the superior uses roundabout phrases, and does not fully tell his subject of his faults, or of the points on which he would wish him to amend, but puts an outward complexion on the matter different from what he thinks within, he speaks not the language of true love, but of dissimulation and pretense. So I say that, when the thing is carried on with this openness and plainness on both sides, then there will be true love of superiors for subjects and of subjects for superiors, and true union of hearts, and we shall get on well; but when otherwise, all will be formality and fiction. Thus the revealing and declaring of oneself to the superior does not destroy love, but increases it.

Hence it follows in the second place that neither will one lose thereby the good name and opinion that the superior had of him; for where there is love, there is always esteem, the will loving only that which the understanding represents to it as good and worthy of being loved. Thus these two things, love and esteem, ordinarily go together. But apart from that, coming down more to particulars, it is clear in the first place that nothing is lost by the mere fact of a man's having temptations, however evil and foul soever. Rather it is a mark of them that serve God and aim at spirituality; whereas other people often do not know what temptation is like, nor recognize temptations when they come, nor need the devil waste his time over them, because of their own will, without solicitation of his, they follow his ways. It is against those that betake themselves to the service of God and aim at virtue and perfection that the war of temptation is generally declared, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *Son, betaking thyself to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation* (Ecclus. ii. 1). Some people have the idea that temptation is a very shameful thing, a thing quite singular and extraordinary, and that nobody ever had the like; and so they dare not declare it, fearing that it will quite startle the superior. But this is a temptation proper to novices, who, having no experience, have no knowledge of temptations, and take that for a new thing which is very old and common. Hold for certain that you will say nothing to the superior or confessor that will be new to him, however extraordinary it may appear to you. Many others have met with that temptation; possibly he himself may have passed through it. *Nothing is new under the sun*, says the Wise Man (Eccles. i. 10). All things are old, though to you they seem new.

Nor again will one lose credit with the superior for revealing to him his faults and imperfections—for that is a consideration that is apt to make this manifestation difficult. The reason is because it is in human nature to fall, for, after all, we are creatures of clay, which is easily broken, and the superior knows well by himself the weakness of his subject, since we are all one same lump; so he is not shocked when people discover to him their faults and imperfections. Gerson, by way of persuading persons of tender age not to omit to confess anything for shame, which is wont to be a very ordinary fault in such little folk, says: "Think you that I shall cherish you less, or make less account of you, for knowing your sins and weaknesses? You are mistaken; nay, I shall thenceforward love you more, as a very dear son, and one who has had confidence in me and disclosed to me what he would not dare disclose to his own father. God knows the tender affection which I feel for one who lays bare to me his miseries; and the more low and shameful they are, the more do they soften my feelings, and make my heart go out towards him." That humility and plain speaking with which he declares his fault, that desire which he shows of better things and of his being cured and finding remedy, naturally moves the superior and makes him deal with him affectionately, and love him. Even when a stranger comes to us and tells us of his troubles and miseries, we receive him with love and a great desire to help him, and try to comfort and encourage him; what, then, must it be with a son? It is very important for all to understand and be persuaded of this truth, that in discovering their imperfections and weaknesses to their spiritual father they shall lose nothing, but rather gain more love and consideration, that so none may omit a duty of such importance as this for the representations that the devil makes to the contrary, false and lying as they are.

For the greater confirmation of this it is to be observed that, while doing evil and having a will and purpose to do it is a shameful thing and unworthy of appearing before God and before men, abhorrence of the evil done, and repentance and shame for having done it, and bewailing and confessing one's errors and sins, is not a shameful thing, but a thing highly honorable before God, and so it should be also before men who are in the place of God. Theologians, then, raise a question, whether at the day of judgment the sins that the saints and blessed have committed are also to be exposed to public view. Opinions differ, but one thing we may say in this matter for certain, and it makes for our purpose. It is that, if those sins are made public, it will not be to the confusion and shame of them that have committed them, but to their honor and praise; for along with the sin there shall come into view such penance and satisfaction as they have done for it, so that they shall not be confounded and ashamed, but rather honored and thought well of. God is quite able to effect this, and we see that He does it here on earth in the case of many saints. Magdalen's sins are exposed to all eyes and published every day; and on her feast day they are chanted in the Gospel to her great honor and renown, and for the honor and glory of God, Who even out of sins is able to draw so much good. And the same we see in the sins of the Apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Matthew, and those of the Prophet David. Thus, by those sins which have been followed by repentance and satisfaction, honor and esteem are not lost, but rather gained.

There is a good similitude often used to explain this. Someone gets a new silk gown; it is well made and looks very well. It catches somewhere and tears; now it looks as though it were spoiled. He puts over the rent a ribbon, or some trimmings of gold, or a very rich piece of embroidery, and the gown turns out very graceful and goodly to see, so that it looks as though that tear had been done on purpose to increase its beauty. So shall the sins of the saints and blessed, if they are to be made manifest, be exposed to all eyes at the day of the last judgment. They shall be to them no cause of confusion and shame, but rather of glory and honor, for their having got out of them as they have. They have put a band of gold and rich embroidery over the rent, whereby they shall be the more honored and adorned. In this way, then, here in religion, when one makes known to confessor or superior his weaknesses and miseries, in a spirit of shame and repentance and a true desire of finding his cure and remedy, not only does he not lose credit with the superior, but rather gains increase of honor and respect and love. The Wise Man says: *There is a confusion that carries with it sin, and another confusion that carries grace and glory* (Ecclus. iv. 25). The confusion and shame with which one manifests his faults, that it is which carries with it honor and glory; but the confusion and shame that makes one hide his faults carries with it sin.

It is recounted of our blessed Father Ignatius that, to win back a priest and religious from a very dissolute and profane life, a life wholly contrary to his profession, after having tried other means to win him without success, he adopted the expedient of going to confession to him. After mentioning his everyday faults, he said he would like also to accuse himself of sundry sins of his past life that pricked his conscience most; so he began to confess the weaknesses of his youth, and ignorances of his past life, with such great sentiment of sorrow and so many tears that the confessor came to change places with him in such sort that he began to love and reverence him whom he had formerly abhorred; took him for his director and guide, and made the Spiritual Exercises which our Father gave him. There followed a great change of his life, to the notable edification of all who had known him before. Hence it will be seen how far a man is from losing hereby honor and reputation. That whereby one comes to figure better in the eyes of God and gain more favor with Him, cannot be a loss to him, but rather a gain, in the eyes of men who are God's ministers and have to make His ways their ways.

Hence may be inferred a truth, well borne out by experience and worthy of consideration, which is this, that, when a man is close and dark and will not go on to declare himself, it is a sign that he has no mind to mend his ways, nor is bent on that, but means to go on anyhow in his faults, and has no desire to get out of them. For if he had true sorrow and repentance for his faults, and a firm purpose of being henceforth all that he ought to be, it is plain to see that he would not lose with his superior by declaring his fault, along with his repentance and purpose of amendment, but rather would gain. This is a thing whereby they lose much who will not go the length of declaring themselves.

CHAPTER VIII

Another Way of Meeting the Aforesaid Difficulty

WE might also answer this difficulty in another way, which is this. If we were thoroughly humble, or desired and aimed at being so, we ought to rejoice at the superior's knowing us and taking us for what we are; and to that end alone we should manifest to him all our evil inclinations and defects; for it is not right that I should be regarded otherwise than for what I am. True humility not only makes a man know himself and have a poor opinion of himself, but makes him also rejoice at other people's knowing him and having a poor opinion of him. It is for other reasons, as we have said, that this clear account to be given of conscience is ordained in religion; but though there were no other good in it than this, that should be sufficient for us if we had a true desire of humility, for this is a great exercise of the same. But if this humility is wanting, if we desire to be regarded and highly thought of, if we desire office and high and honorable posts, it is not surprising that there should come over us a vain fear, which is wont to frighten, or rather to delude, persons of that sort. "If my faults come to the knowledge of my superior, I shall be always shoved away into a corner and forgotten." Saints and servants of God, we see, feign faults and even sins, not to be taken up and promoted to dignities and honorable posts, but to be left alone in their corner. But he who for a contrary motive makes it his policy to throw a veil over the real faults that he has, that men may esteem and promote him and reckon him for more than he is worth, shows himself very far from virtue.

Here there is a very chief point to be observed, which we have touched upon also elsewhere, which is that one of the chiefest things in which a religious should exercise and show humility and mortification and other virtues, is in the case of such virtue being necessary for the accurate observance of his rules, since therein consists our advancement and perfection. If he has not virtue enough to exercise and put in practice the details of humility and mortification to which his rule and institute oblige him, it may be reckoned that he has none at all. What is the good of virtue and mortification if, when it comes to a case of a natural bashfulness or the loss of a little credit, a main rule like this is to be set aside? If you had true humility and self-knowledge and sorrow for your faults, this shame and confusion that is felt in declaring it should be taken cheerfully in atonement and satisfaction for the fault, and that alone should be enough to make you have recourse to the superior. Such was the behavior of the Emperor Theodosius, an example well worthy of being copied. When Rufinus told him not to go to church because St. Ambrose was bent on barring his entrance, the emperor said in a true spirit of Christian humility: "I am minded to go to church, and hear from the bishop what I deserve." So you should say: "I am minded to go to my superior, I am minded to go to my confessor, and hear of him what I deserve, to know myself and reckon myself for what I am, and to receive from the Lord this shame and humiliation in satisfaction and atonement for my sins." This is genuine humility and compunction, and a good sign of repentance; a sign that one does not feel, as possibly one might feel, more shame at discovering oneself to a man than at having offended

God. Very far is such a one from true humility. If we are to desire, as our rule says, to suffer injuries and false witnesses and be accounted fools, without our giving occasion for the same, how much more should we desire it for doing an act of virtue, obedience, and religion, and keeping a rule so important as this!

But that we may not seem to wish to carry everything by the way of the spirit only, let us take another way to smooth and further facilitate this business, the way that we mentioned in the last chapter, which is also a good and true way. I mean that not only does a man lose no credit with the superior by discovering and manifesting himself, but rather he gains with him honor and esteem and increase of love; while he loses all that by not declaring himself. To which I add another thing, which follows from the above, that, where this open dealing exists, the superior in that case puts much trust in such a person, and with reason, for he knows and understands what there is in him, and is satisfied that he will have recourse to him for anything that turns up; but when a subject does not altogether show his hand, a thing that readily lets itself be understood, the superior then cannot trust him, because he does not know him and is not aware of what there is in him, and so is forced to be cautious, looking at what he is about and keeping an eye on him.

And this should be well observed, because it is one of the chief sources whence spring much discontent and bitterness among subjects, which unpleasantness would be stopped and brought to an end if people would be open with the superior. It is a very common experience that by this mutual dealing and intercourse irritation is removed, and the apprehensions and imaginations dispelled which superiors had of inferiors, and inferiors also sometimes have of superiors. These suspicions and fears are generally like the phantoms of the night, which horrify and frighten afar off, and if you go up to them and touch them, you will find that they are a branch of a tree which you took for a thing of the next world. So it happens here. Things that upset and frightened you, and seemed to be something considerable, by touching them, handling them, dealing with them, vanish into thin air, and you find them to be nothing at all. Seneca said very well, speaking of the brave and undaunted spirit in which we should face things, that there are things which our failing to face is not because they are difficult in themselves, but they are difficult because we fail to face them—*Non quia difficilia sunt, non audemus; sed quia non audemus, difficilia sunt.* If we would set ourselves to it, and pluck up heart to face them, we should see that they have not the difficulty which we imagine. To this effect he alleges the similitude of phantoms that we have mentioned, calling them, in the phrase of the poet [Vergil], "shadows terrible to behold"—*terribiles visu formae.* Observe, he does not say that the things were terrible, but that they looked terrible; but go and touch them, and you will see that it is all nothing: so it is in what we have just been speaking about.

CHAPTER IX

That We Owe Much Gratitude to God for Making the Account of Conscience in the Society so Easy and Pleasant, and How It Comes to Be So

WE owe much gratitude to the Lord for the singular favor and benefit He has done to the Society, in that there is in it this manifestation to superiors, and that practised so pleasantly and joyously, although in itself it is more difficult than exterior penances and mortifications. The difficulty there is in it may be well understood from that which is found in sacramental confession, wherein men commonly feel more difficulty than in the rest of the commandments. To lighten the difficulty, it was necessary that there should be also a divine precept, a most strict precept, of the seal of secrecy in confession. And with all that, some people make such a difficulty over it that, rather than open out, they choose to start a hell for themselves in this life, with fits of remorse and anxiety dogging their steps, and in the next life a hell consummated forever. But when you reveal your whole heart to the superior, you do more than go to confession, since you reveal and declare not only sins, which are the matter of confession, but what is not sin nor matter of sin. And many a time a man is apt to feel more repugnance in mentioning a piece of vulgarity or meanness that he has fallen into than in mentioning graver sins; and what is more, all this is done out of confession. It is, then, a thing greatly to value and to render endless thanks for, that the Lord has made to us so easy and so pleasant a thing in itself so difficult, and otherwise so profitable.

But let us see the reason of this facility and pleasantness of procedure in the Society. The first and chiefest is the grace of religious vocation, for God gives special aid to every religious order to take the means that make for its advancement according to the institute that it professes; that is what we call the grace of vocation. And since for the end which the Society professes—which involves our being liable to tramp the world over, and deal with all sorts of people for the help of souls—it is a means so important and necessary, for reasons given above, that the superior should know us from head to foot, within and without, hence it is that God gives us special support and aid to do this.

The second thing that renders it easy and pleasant is the welcome given by superiors, the fatherly affection that subjects find in them, the gentleness and love with which they receive them, till it looks as though they were there for no other purpose than to hear and console you. This is a thing of much importance, and it is needful for subjects to be persuaded that they shall find this hearty welcome from superiors, that all may have recourse to them with confidence, and not fail on a point so important as this for fear of superiors and their apparent harshness. And a help to their being persuaded of this is the fact that it greatly concerns superiors themselves to give a good welcome to their subjects, it being their office to do so, and they would fail in their duty if they did it not. The blessed St. Bernard on these words of the Canticles (i. 3): *We will be glad and rejoice in thee, mindful of thy affectionate ways, more pleasant and luscious than wine,* gives a very good admonition to superiors. These are his words: "Hear this, ye prelates and superiors, ye who are more anxious to be terrors to your subjects than to do them good. Learn to behave as mothers, not as lords and masters. Try to be loved rather than feared; show even to your subjects a maternal affection, teeming with milk, not puffed out with imperiousness and an air of authority." And he quotes to this effect the saying of St. Paul: *Brethren, if any man for frailty be overtaken by any sin, do ye who are spiritual instruct such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering thyself lest thou too be tempted* (Gal. vi. 1). And that of the Prophet Ezechiel: *The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require at thy hand an account of his blood* (iii. 18). Woe to superiors, he says, who do not give a gracious welcome to their subjects when they have recourse to them in their temptations and weaknesses! Woe to them if they send them away offended and soured, and show them no fatherly affection! If on this account the subject dies or takes a turn for the worse, as may well happen, God will demand an account of it from the superior. Thus, if it were not for your sake, but only for what concerns himself, the superior is forced to do his office well, that you may do yours well.

The third thing that makes this practice easy and agreeable in the Society is the very frequent and common example and use of it that exists, and that we see every day in our brethren. We may say here what St. Augustine says occurred to him, when he was thinking of becoming a convert to our Christian religion, and the observance of chastity made a difficulty to him, and he could not bring himself to make up his mind. He put before himself, he says, continence under the figure of a highly honorable lady, who pointed out to him many boys and girls that she kept covered under her large mantle, and many other persons of various states and ages, all very chaste and virtuous; and she said to him with a smile, as if to mock him: "Can't you do what these boys and girls do? Or, think you, that what these boys and girls do, they do of their own strength and not of God?" With this the saint was greatly encouraged. So you may say when the devil puts before you a difficulty: "Come, come, can't you do what they all do? Won't you do what your neighbor does, a man of longer standing, greater learning, more prudence and discretion than you?" This smooths down the difficulties so much that it not only facilitates things, but makes us even feel a difficulty in not doing it, seeing that it would be remarked and give disedification of you not to do what all do. Thus we should all try to secure the continuance of this good practice and custom, for the example of one is an encouragement to others. They who can show the longest standing and most learning are most bound to keep up this and the like practices by their example and by their talk and conversation. Such persons, as they can do most good, are also capable of doing most harm; for the rest have regard to what they do and say, and esteem and follow what they see them esteem and follow. And, besides, it is important for everyone to keep up this use and practice, since thereby it will become easy; while if the use is dropped, in a few days it will become very difficult, as happens in other exercises of humility and mortification. We see it also in the case of confession, that they who leave a twelvemonth between one confession and another find it a very difficult business, while to them who confess often it is easy and pleasant.

In the fourth place it will be a help to know that what is said to the superior or the prefect of spiritual things is not said as to a judge, but as to a father, that he may give comfort, counsel, and remedy; and that no one can be punished for anything said in this court, even though it deserve punishment, any more than for what is said in confession; for these courts [of conscience and of justice] are different, and no argument can be drawn from the one to the other.

Fifthly, a thing that will greatly forward this manifestation of conscience, and help to confirm what has been said, is noted in our Constitutions: it is that the superior must keep everything secret that is there said. Thus you may be quite sure that what you say in giving an account of conscience will remain in the breast of the superior, and will be known or communicated to none, nor will any harm or disgrace come upon you on that account. Even the natural secret here is binding, and binding under mortal sin; and, besides, our Father General Claudius Aquaviva has backed it up with grave and severe ordinances, adding pains and penalties for those who are careless on this point, even to the length of deposing them from office; and he would have subjects not only made aware of this his ordinance, but, further, know that superiors who fail in the execution and observance of it shall be deposed. As to prevent men from shunning sacramental confession it was necessary also to impose upon priests a strict precept of the seal and secrecy thereof, so likewise, that none may take occasion of shunning manifestation of conscience, our Father has judged it necessary to insist so much on the secrecy of the communication that there may be no cooling down of ardor, no falling off, in an affair of such importance; for, he says, I do not know that there could be anything more pernicious than that to the good government of the Society, which desires to lead its subjects in the way of perfection by inward training and spiritual direction rather than by outward enactments and penances. Hence superiors will understand what great harm they will do to the order if they are careless of secrecy in these things.

CHAPTER X

Of the Method to Be Observed in Giving an Account of Conscience

POUR out thine heart like water in the sight of the Lord (Lam. ii. 19). By this comparison the Prophet Jeremy declares to us very well how we ought to manifest and declare our heart to him who holds the place of God, when we give an account of conscience; it should be as when we empty out a vessel of water. When a vessel of oil or honey is emptied, some part remains behind, sticking to the vessel; and if it is wine or vinegar, at least the smell remains. But when a vessel of water is emptied, nothing remains sticking to the sides; there remains neither smell, nor taste, nor any trace whatever of what was there, but it is as though the vessel had never held anything. In this way you should empty out and declare your heart before your superior when you give an account of your conscience, so that nothing be left behind, and there remain neither smell nor taste, nor any trace whatsoever.

Because this is a thing of such importance, and such a chief and efficacious means for the spiritual advancement of our souls, our Father has wished that, besides other times that this is done, it should be done more particularly every six months, taking in all that time, and that this manifestation should always go before the renovation of vows. So it has always been practised in the Society, and since the Fourth General Congregation it has been put among the

Common Rules. As besides the ordinary confessions that we make at frequent intervals, he wishes us then to make a general confession of all that time; so he wishes, that, besides the ordinary account which is given at frequent intervals, there should be then given a general account of all that time. It would seem that he could not have given a more appropriate means than this for the spiritual and inward renovation of each. And our Father General Claudius Aquaviva in his "Instruction to Visitors" commends to them greatly the use of this means, and says: "If this practice of giving an account of conscience is done on the part of subjects in the proper way, and is taken as it ought on the part of superiors, it will doubtless tell greatly for the renovation of spirit and augmentation of virtue and perfection in the Society."

In accordance with this pronouncement are certain very grave words spoken by St. Basil, who says: "Whoever wishes to attain any signal and notable perfection, ought to take care that no movement pass in his soul of which he does not give an account to the superior. In this way what is good will be confirmed, and what is not so will be remedied; and thus little by little, getting rid of evil, and planting and causing to take root good, we shall come to arrive at perfection." As in clear water the pebbles and very minute grains of sand which are at the bottom are clearly seen, so the subject should make himself so clear and transparent to his superior that he can see all the motes and imperfections of his soul. And that we may do this the better and more easily, we have in the Society an excellent instruction, on which I wish to observe that, of the two parts which it contains, the first, which is the preface or heading, is the principal; for therein is contained the whole substance of the Fortieth Rule of the Summary of the Constitutions, which treats of the manifestation of conscience and explains how it is to be done. After telling each one to reflect on the importance attached to this observance in the Constitutions, the rule goes on to say: "Wherefore let each one with great integrity, in confession or under ordinary secrecy, as shall please him and be to his greater comfort, manifest his whole soul entirely, without concealing anything in which he has offended the Lord of all, starting from the last account of conscience that he gave; or at least let him discover the defects that weigh heaviest on his conscience since that time." I say, then, that here is the main element of this business, and anyone who passes over what is said in this preface will not give a good or entire account of his conscience, even though he runs through all the second part, which contains fourteen particular points.

That this may more clearly appear, there will be no need to go through the other points; but let us take for example one of the chief of them, and let it be point the third, which bids us give an account of our temptations, passions, and bad inclinations. This is one of the main things of which a man has to give an account, what temptations he has, whether they are troublesome and importunate, of the ease or difficulty which he finds in resisting them, and the manner in which he does it. This question says no more, nor is anything more said on this head in the whole of the second part of this instruction. But, I ask, will it be enough for giving a good and clear account of one's conscience to one's spiritual father, so that he may know the state of one's soul in this particular, to tell him all one's temptations and all one's evil inclinations? I answer No, but it is necessary to tell also one's falls, if, perchance, there be any; for it is one thing to say: "I am inclined to pride," and another thing to say: "I am so inclined to pride that I desired or did such a thing in order to be regarded and thought well of; and I greatly resented the being told to do this and that, and I made such an excuse to get off doing it, and the only real reason was because I had not the virtue or humility to do it, as otherwise I could have done it very well." It is one thing to say: "I am passionate and impatient," and another thing to say: "I am so impatient and so passionate that I came to lose my temper, and say such and such a disedifying thing." It is one thing to say: "I have impure temptations," and another thing to say: "I was so weak in the affair that I dwelt and took delight in it," and so forth. It is clear that a different judgment is formed of him who has fallen under temptation from what is formed of him who has had a temptation and bravely and manfully resisted it, and a different treatment is required in the two cases. In a fever case it is very important for the doctor to know, and also very important for the patient to let it be known, whether the patient be a strong and hearty man, or a weak subject; for the treatment of fever is different in the two cases. So it is very important for your spiritual physician, and for you also, that he should know your strength or weakness, to know how to treat you and the remedy that should be applied. It is not enough for you to tell him your temptations and bad inclinations, but you must tell him also of your falls, if there are any, for otherwise there is no knowing your weakness or your virtue and fortitude. And therefore the Forty-first Rule of the Summary, treating also of this matter, tells us to manifest to our superior not only our temptations, but also our failings. This is declared in the preface to this instruction, wherein it is said expressly that the subject must declare his whole soul to his superior, without concealing anything in which he has offended the Divine Majesty, or at least declare the failings that weigh heaviest on his soul; and nothing more is said of this in the fourteen points that follow. So anyone who does not observe this will be turning into an idle ceremony and vain formality a thing of such leading importance and made so much of in the order. This lesson may be profitable to all Christians generally, that they may know how to give an account of their soul to their spiritual fathers.

But to throw further light on this matter, I observe that the subject must not be satisfied with telling his faults in general, but he must tell them in particular, for in that way and in no other does he give a clear account of himself. And the same is also good advice for confession. You must not rest content in confession with saying in general: "I let myself be carried away with bad thoughts;" but you must say to what extent you were carried away. And though the matter be no more than venial sin, and venial sins are not necessary matter of confession, nevertheless, if we do confess them, as it is right we should confess them, we should not speak in generalities, which considerably gloss over the fault, but also mention any particular circumstance which adds to the gravity of the case. For clearly a penitent does not quite declare his fault by saying: "I have said offensive words, impatient words, or words of detraction," when the word was such that the telling of it will make the fault appear greater than a general expression would show. And if one has failed in obedience, and given notable disedification thereby, one should not rest satisfied with saying: "I accuse myself of having failed in obedience," but he should specify the particular thing or the particular manner, so far as it throws more light on the fault and alters the confessor's judgment of it. In like manner I say, in giving an account of conscience, the thing should not be done in general expressions and roundabout phrases, but with great simplicity, thoroughness, and clearness, without there remaining the least corner hidden away, or tiny pocket not laid open, according to what St. Paul says of the Church: *That Christ might make appear before his eyes one full of glory, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and unspotted* (Eph. v. 27). It is in wrinkles that dirt and grime is apt to hide; so there should not be in our soul any wrinkle or fold of any sort, but all should be plain and smooth.

Our Father requires anyone entering the order to give a clear account of his conscience, not only declaring the bad inclinations that he has at present, and the vices and sins to which now he is most inclined, but also the bad inclinations that he had, and the vices and sins which troubled and assailed him most in his past life. As it is a great help to the doctor if his patient will tell him not only the illness that he feels at present, but also the illnesses that he has had, that he may guess whether the present indisposition comes from that quarter, and so treat him for the present as to prevent any possibility of a recurrence of the past; so in spiritual things, if you wish to give a clear and entire account of your soul to your spiritual physician, you should not only tell him your present habits and inclinations, but also your past, for from thence there may often be inferred the cause and root of the present trouble. For this they are wont to advise anyone making a general confession to make it to the priest whom he intends to choose for his ordinary confessor in future, that he may be the better able to help him for having fuller knowledge of his soul. The temptations and evil motions that a man feels at present are apt many a time to be traces and remnants of old weaknesses, the penalty and punishment of an evil past life; and so, however recollected and fenced in from the world the man now be, he will suffer against his will what he would not, in pain and penalty for past license and evil habits. In that case there is no reason for him to be frightened; what he has to do is to practise patience and humility, and try to gather from it sorrow and shame, not only for the present, but also for the past; and so it will do him no harm.

Finally, it is to be observed here that giving an account of one's conscience and going to confession, generally, are distinct things in the Society, as is evident from the different rules that we have on the subject and by the difference of their purpose and matter. It is at the same time a certain fact that anyone may give an account of his conscience either in confession or out of confession, as shall better please him and make for the greater comfort of his soul, since that is expressly stated in the Constitutions. But here is to be observed a thing which our Father General Claudius Aquaviva observes in the instruction which he gave to visitors. And this being such a serious subject, I have thought it well to put here Father Aquaviva's exact words, which are the following. After having laid down the difference there is between an account of conscience and confession, and after having said that anyone that likes may give his account of conscience in confession, he goes on to say: "Wherefore, though no one is to be obliged in the Society to give his account of conscience out of confession—seeing that the Constitutions leave it to the choice of each in view of his greater comfort and consolation—yet they deserve praise who, excepting things which properly belong to confession, which things may be manifested to the superior in confession, give their account of conscience out of confession, and reveal themselves entirely to the superior, that superiors may use this knowledge freely, and without let or hindrance, to direct and govern their subjects to their greater advantage and to the greater service of God." Thus it is better to give the account of conscience out of confession, and so to show greater confidence in the superior; even as he who puts a jewel into the hand of his friend to keep for him shows greater confidence in him than if he gave it in a casket locked and sealed and took away the key.

CHAPTER XI

Answers to Certain Doubts Arising from the Above

FROM what has been said certain doubts arise, which may possibly occur to anyone. The first is this. We have said that on the one hand it is better to give the account of conscience out of confession; and on the other that this account of conscience should be not only of temptations and evil inclinations, but also of failings and falls, if there are any; and if declaration is not made of them, it will not be a good account of conscience. Then I ask: "If, which God forbid, one is overcome by the force of temptation so far as to have a grave and shameful fall, is it possible that the rule should require him to give an account of that to the superior out of confession? That, it would seem, is a difficult and very uphill thing, and commonly could not be endured." To that I say that in such a case it is not the intention of the rule, nor of our Father, that that should be told out of confession; rather, this was one of the chief reasons why the rule gives an alternative, allowing one to do this under ordinary secrecy or in confession, as shall be for the individual's greater comfort. And this is declared expressly in one of the rules of the Provincial, where on the question of giving and taking an account of conscience, after the subject has had his say, it is said that the Provincial may ask him any question that he thinks proper, but with this reserve, that "questions that would put the man to great shame are not to be asked out of confession"—*quae hominem pudore multum afficerent, ea extra confessionem interroganda non essent.* Such things as these, not only should not the superior, or the spiritual father either, ask about out of confession, but neither should they allow the other so to tell them. Chaste ears should not hear such things out of confession, so it is better to reserve them for that occasion. And that is what our Father General means to say in the words we quoted in the last chapter, where, after saying that they do better who give their account out of confession, he adds, "apart from certain things that are properly kept for confession."

The second doubt is more serious. We have said on the one hand, and our Father says it expressly in his Constitutions, that the purpose of giving an account of conscience to superiors is that so they may be able better to rule and govern their subjects, by not being ignorant of anything concerning them, and may be able to order and provide what is fitting, as well for individuals as for the whole body of the Society; and on the other hand, according to the same Constitutions, anyone may give this account in confession: hence it seems to follow that the government of the Society and of its superiors is done through the confessional. This difficulty has given no little food for thought to some through their not understanding how the thing works in the Society. To make it understood, I say in the first place that so far is the Society from governing through the confessional, that even what some theologians say the confessor may do without breaking the seal in the way of availing himself sometimes of what he knows in confession, is a doctrine which our Father General Claudius Aquaviva most severely forbids anyone to teach in the Society, or in any way put in practice; confessors are to behave in these things as though any knowledge they happen to have in confession were non-existent. This is in accordance with a decree and mandate on this matter issued four years after by His Holiness Clement VIII, which decree is quoted by Father Francis Suarez and others. And the Society does more than that, for even of the account of conscience given out of confession she orders secrecy to be observed with great care, as we said in the ninth chapter. Now, when such a great caution is observed over things that are known out of confession, what will be done in matters relating to confession, so as not to render it odious, and not to commit any sacrilege against the seal?

Now to meet the exact point of the difficulty, I say that it is nowise undesirable that the spiritual and interior government of souls be carried on by means of confession, but rather that is just one of the great fruits and advantages of the sacrament. By the penitent's clear declaration of all his wounds, ailments, and weaknesses, the confessor, acting as physician of the soul, can apply to it the treatment and give it the remedy that is most to the purpose and direct it as it ought to be directed. In so high a degree is this true that in the canon law Pope Alexander III orders that, for this end alone of guiding and directing souls and giving them the advice that suits them, the confessions should be heard of those persons who are so wicked and sinful as to be incapable of absolution. Such people say that it is impossible for them to observe continence or keep from sinning, and therefore they have not a true purpose of amendment. Yet, though they cannot be absolved, the sovereign pontiff then advises their going to confession and confessing all their sins, and giving an account of their evil life and their want of the requisite dispositions for this confession. And he bids the confessor receive and hear them kindly in order to give them wholesome advice and remedy; for perchance thereby their heart will be touched, and they will give up the occasions of sin; and by this act of humility, and sundry good works which they will be directed to practise, the Lord will open their eyes so that they shall entirely give over their sin and make a good confession. Thus it is no new thing, but a very ancient and usual and well-approved practice of the Church, to take confession for a means of guiding and directing souls in this manner.

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius in his Life that, when he was elected General of the Society by the votes of all the first fathers, again and again he stood out against the election, saying that he was not fit for the post. He was greatly importuned on all hands to accept, and told that his refusal was a resistance to the will of God, well declared by the unanimous choice of all. In the end, for all that they could do, they could not get him to acquiesce at the time. They had to come to a compromise with him, and accept an expedient which he proposed, which was this. He said: "I will put the whole business in the hands of my confessor; I will give him an account of the sins of my whole life, and declare the bad habits and inclinations of my soul, my weaknesses and miseries, past and present, spiritual and corporal; and if with all that he shall command and counsel me in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to take on me so great a charge, I will obey him." He did so. He went into retreat for some days, made his general confession to a holy man named Friar Theophilus, of the Order of St. Francis, and then asked him what he thought of it. He replied that his opinion was that he should undertake the charge of the government of the Society, and that in resisting the election he would be resisting the Holy Ghost. Thereupon he accepted the charge which they wanted to put upon him. Now I ask, will anyone be found, how malevolent soever, to open his mouth against this act of our blessed Father Ignatius, to slander it or see any sign of artifice in it? There is none, I believe, who could open his mouth otherwise than to praise it; and so it is related in his Life to his great praise and credit. Now the manner in which our Lord raised our Father to be head and founder of this order, is exactly the manner in which he teaches us to proceed; and so he prescribes to us this practice of declaring to the superior in confession, or simply under secrecy, all our bad inclinations, vices, and passions, and all our faults and imperfections, that so the superior may the better direct us in the way of virtue and perfection which we profess.

So I say that the public and exterior government of the Society is not and cannot be through the confessional; but it is very suitable, and sometimes necessary for the spiritual and interior government of souls, that it should be by way of confession in the manner that has been said. Thus we see it to be the practice throughout the Church of God that, when anyone has doubts and difficulties as to his behavior in any particular conjuncture, he chooses a prudent and learned confessor, and in confession or simply under seal of secrecy, as may be for his greater comfort, gives him an account of the business, to get counsel and direction therein. That is just what our Father means when he says that this account of conscience may be given in confession if it be to the greater comfort of the subject to do so. Thus Rectors in the Society are not appointed or deposed from anything known in confession, nor professed, nor professors, nor any other officials; that would be an error, a great error, and it would also be an error on the part of anyone who thought such a thing of the Society.

But it must be observed here as a thing of great importance, that such a conjuncture may arrive and such circumstances concur as to warrant the confessor to oblige his penitent, whoever he be, in conscience and under pain of sin, to put it to the superior not to place him in such an office, or send him on such a mission, and remove him from such an occasion of sin, declaring to him the cause and the manifest danger which he feels would be incurred therein, considering his weakness. In such a case, I ask, what better or more honorable means could be given to the person than to tell him to go and declare the case to the superior in confession? For then, with all honor to the party concerned and to his order, the superior can remove him from the occasion, and not expose him to dangers too great for his strength; so the remedy will be found and his honor saved. And all this the superior then does, not only with the leave and consent of the party concerned, but even at his request, the importance of the matter calling for it. And at other times, though the penitent is not so sure whether he is being exposed to danger or not, and yet is in fear and doubt about it, in such cases it is a great relief and consolation to declare your doubt and difficulty to the superior and put yourself in his hands; for then if you are put in that situation, the danger will not fall on you, as it would have done had you not declared yourself, but it will be all laid to the charge of the superior; and God will concur with the obedient man and give him strength to come well out of what they have commanded him, since he has done what in him lay.

In the third place I say that, though it is true that a man can give his account of conscience in confession, according to the rule, yet the better and more praiseworthy course is to do it out of confession, as has been said. And as all now know this, they commonly wish to choose the better part, which is to give it out of confession. That puts an end to all scruples and murmurs and suspicions that might arise about superiors' governing by what they know in confession, since all commonly give this account out of it. And even in the case that we spoke of in the first doubt, of one choosing to give this account in confession, there is no religious, however imperfect he be, who would not be glad, and ask for it, that in view of what will make for the good of his soul, and to deliver him from occasions of sin and not expose him to dangers, the superior should be able to make use of what he says in confession, provided it be in such a way that no harm may come upon him thereby, but only good, and that others should not be able to get wind of any fault or imperfection of his; for in this way he loses nothing and gains much, and obliges the superior to look even more carefully to the saving of his honor. And thus it comes to be that even that spiritual and interior government of souls, which might be lawfully and holily based upon what is known only by confession, is not usually practised in the Society, but we go only by what is known out of confession, as has been said. For all rejoice and find more comfort in giving their account out of confession of all that is needful for this purpose, that so the superior may be able more easily, and without any consideration arising out of confession, to guide them and help them in the way of perfection.

St. Bonaventure lays down this doctrine explicitly, and says that is is very proper for the superior to know right well the consciences of his subjects, their inclinations and habits; and also that he should be well acquainted with the corporal and spiritual strength of each, that so he may be able better to rule and govern them, portioning out and entrusting to everyone the task and charge that suits him according to his strength, for not all are alike equal to all things. He quotes to this effect that saying of Scripture: *Aaron and his sons shall enter into the sanctuary, and they shall arrange the labors of all, and apportion the burden which each one is to bear* (Num. iv. 19). St. Bonaventure says that Aaron and his sons are prelates and superiors, higher and lower, whose office it is to enter there into the interior of their subjects, and know the virtue, strength, and capacity of each, that so they may be able to portion out and distribute offices, charges, and ministries of religion according to the virtue and capacity of each one, *to everyone according to his proper ability* (Matt. xxv. 15).

TWENTY-FOURTH TREATISE

ON FRATERNAL CORRECTION

CHAPTER I

That Correction Is a Mark of Love, and the Great Good There Is in It

THE blessed St. Bernard says that it is a great mark of God's loving us as sons when He rebukes and chastises us. And Holy Writ is full of the same thought. *Whomsoever God loveth, He chastiseth, and taketh pleasure in him as a father in a son,* says the Wise Man (Prov. iii. 12). And St. John in the Apocalypse: *Those whom I love, I rebuke and chastise* (iii. 19). And the Apostle St. Paul: *Whomsoever God loveth, he chastiseth, and scourgeth everyone whom he receiveth as a son: for what son is there whom his father doth not correct?* (Heb. xii. 6-7). And so the saints say that it is one of the special benefits and favors that God does to a soul, when He rebukes it and strikes it with heartfelt remorse of conscience upon its falling into sin and committing a fault. It is a great sign of the love of God, and of your being of the number of the elect, that He does not abandon you entirely, but calls and invites you by this remorse. Where this rebuke and heartfelt remorse are wanting, and God sends no chastisement, they say that it is a sign of His great anger, and that this is one of the greatest punishments that God inflicts in this life. St. Bernard applies to it the words of Ezechiel: *And my indignation at thee shall cease, and my jealousy of thee shall be taken away; I will no more show my displeasure at thee by rebuking thee* (xvi. 42); which is what the Lord had said by Isaias: *I have sworn no more to be angry with thee, and I will rebuke thee no more* (liv. 9). God utters this as a great threat. It shows God's greatest anger, says St. Bernard, when He ceases to be angry and ceases to rebuke. If God's jealousy of you and His rebuking of you has not abandoned you, neither has His love; for such is the kindness which God shows to His friends.

Now as in God this is an indication and sign of His loving us as sons, so also in the superior, one of the things that most shows his love for a subject is his charitably correcting him and admonishing him of the faults that are observed in him, that he may amend them. *Better is plain correction than a love that maketh no show* (Prov. xxvii. 5). Excellent is the inward charity and love that you bear me, but that is your affair; little good will it do me if you do not come to show it in deeds. But when the superior's love goes so far as to admonish me of a fault which I had not seen or did not take to be a fault, that I may amend it, that is the greatest love and the most profitable for me. This is love shown in act; the true love of a father, desirous of the good of his son. For if the superior did not love you as a son and desire your spiritual good and improvement, he would not take you in hand nor warn you of your fault. We see here in life how, when a father catches his son playing some prank, he at once rebukes and chastises him, because he is his son, and he loves him as a son and wants him to be good and virtuous; whereas, if he were not his son, though he saw him doing something that he had better not, he would leave him alone and say nothing to him and take no notice of him. "Let his father look to him and teach him better; he is no concern of mine." Moreover, not only does the superior hereby show that he loves you as a son, but he shows also his conviction that you love him as a father, and are convinced that he loves you, and speaks thus to you with the affection of a father and for the desire that he has of your good. He shows also that he is satisfied with you, that you have virtue and humility enough to receive the correction and admonition, since otherwise he would not give it you.

On the other hand, when the superior does not deal with you so openly and plainly, admonishing you of your faults and of what shocks people and makes them complain of your conduct, it is because he does not love you as a son, or because he has made up his mind that you do not love him as a father, or because he thinks that you have not virtue enough to take admonition and correction well, all of which shows lack of love and esteem on his part. There is no true love there. Possibly there may be some outward show of it; but it will not be true love, only apparent and put on. What is the use of giving you outward marks of love and regard, if at heart he takes you for a defaulter and deficient in this and that respect and dares not tell you of it? This is duplicity and pretense, making an outward show of sentiment and putting on a face different from what you feel interiorly. This is the behavior and language of the world. There in the world people go on in this manner because they dare not say what they think, and so they put on a countenance which belies what they feel at heart. They will often praise and flatter you, and make a show of thinking well of your conduct, while at heart they think quite otherwise, according to the saying of the prophet: *His words are smoother than oil, but they stab* (Psalm liv. 22). *With their mouth they blessed me, but they cursed me at heart* (Psalm lxi. 5). *Their tongues are flattering* (Psalm v. ii), but *the poison of asps is under their lips* (Psalm cxxxix. 4). But here in religion there should be nothing of this double-dealing. Everything should be clear and smooth; the charity and union that we profess does not allow of anything else. What? Have I got a fault, or many faults, which perhaps I do not see, or do not take them for faults, nor have any idea that they shock other people; and the superior sees them, and knows that others are shocked and complain of them, and yet there is none to tell me of them? That is not charity. Our Father Francis Borgia says very well: "If you had your cloak wrong way on, or a black smudge on your face, evidently anyone would do you a charity who warned you of it, and you would thank him; while on the other hand you would resent it, and take it for an ill turn, if another saw and did not tell you. With much more reason should we be of that same mind and sentiment in regard of deficiencies in virtue which disedify our brethren."

So we ought to take it for a great blessing to have someone lovingly and charitably warning us of our faults, for with the great love that we bear ourselves we often fail to see them, or do not take them for faults. Affection and self-love blind us, as in the case of the mother, who for the great love that she bears her own will take the ugly child for beautiful and call the negro ruddy. So there are never wanting to us colorable pretexts for coloring and covering over our faults. That is why philosophers say that no man is a good judge in his own cause; since, if the laws hold in suspicion any judge who is a friend of either party to a suit, how much more should a man be suspect in his own cause, being such a friend of himself! A third party, viewing our case with dispassionate eyes, will be better able to see our faults and a better judge of them. Besides, as they say, two pair of eyes see better than one.

Plutarch says that we should give money to buy an enemy, since enemies are they who tell us the truth; while friends nowadays are all adulation and flattery, telling you that there is nothing left to desire, while there is nothing in you that they think well of. We see how usual this is at the present day in the world, and God grant that the usage may not come into religion! We men are so vain that we hear these things with relish, and even believe them, where we ought to do the contrary, as did the Royal Prophet when he said: *Let the just correct me in kindness and rebuke me, but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head* (Psalm cxl. 5). The blessed St. Augustine says that by the smooth unction of the sinner is understood adulation and flattery, which the prophet holds in abhorrence, and would rather be corrected by the just with severity and mercy than praised and flattered with these smooth adulations, since they serve for nothing but to make a greater fool of a man and add to his illusions. He quotes the saying of Isaias (iii. 12) : *My people, they who praise and say wonderful things of thee are they who deceive and ruin thee.* Contrariwise, they who correct and admonish us do us a great favor. *Better the wounds of a friend than the false kisses of an enemy* (Prov. xxvii. 6). *Better be corrected by the wise than led astray by the flattery of fools* (Eccles. vii. 6). That which gives pain is that which heals; the other is no treatment at all, but makes the cure more difficult, because we persuade ourselves that there is no fault, and so never set to work amending it.

Diogenes used to say that for the correction of your faults you should have a right true friend to admonish you, or else a bitter enemy to scold you; thus between the warning of the one and the scolding of the other your vice and fault is got rid of. The second is the way of the world, where faults are not told except where there are enmities; then true faults are discovered. But here in religion faults are not told, nor rebuke and admonition given, in hatred or rancor, or out of animosity and ill-will that they bear against you, but with true love and desire of your good. We rejoice in the former of those two advantages, in that we have in the superior a faithful and true friend, who with great love warns us of our faults. We should set great store by that, and reckon that he discovers to us a treasure when he warns us of some defect which, if we did not know of, we should never amend.

CHAPTER II

That Pride Is the Cause of Our Not Taking Correction Well

ONE of the things in which man's great pride is best seen is the great difficulty with which he takes correction and warning of his faults, a difficulty so great that you will hardly find anyone willing to accept such correction and warning. St. Augustine says very well: "Who shall easily find a man willing to be reproved? And where shall we find that wise man, of whom it is said in Proverbs (ix. 8): *Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee*?" Know for certain that he is a wise man, since he knows how to receive lovingly so great a benefit as is that of correction; but where are such wise men to be found? *Who is he, and we will praise him* (Ecclus. xxxi. 9). St. Gregory says: "We are so full of pride, and it is so rooted in our hearts, that we cannot bear to hear our faults told, nor brook reprehension, because we take it to be an injury to our character and a disparagement of what we are worth. That touches us to the quick, as a thing affecting our honor, and we at once resent it, and instead of being grateful we make a grievance of it, and fancy we are being wronged and persecuted." So some speak out clearly; when they are corrected and admonished repeatedly of their defects, they say that they are being persecuted and spitefully treated. There are besides, says the saint, some who acknowledge and tell their faults willingly; but when others tell them of them and find fault with them, they at once get excited, defend and excuse themselves, because they cannot brook being rated at that. These people are not humble, and do not tell their faults with true knowledge of what they are. If they were humble, and reckoned themselves to be in fault, and said such things feeling what they said, they would not so much resent others' saying it to them, nor excuse and defend themselves at such length.

True humility consists in knowing yourself and making little account of yourself, and desiring that others likewise should know your faults and not make much of you. Those other people, says St. Gregory, let it clearly appear that they do not tell their faults from any desire of being made small account of, but to appear good and humble, since it is written: *The just man is the first accuser of himself* (Prov. xviii. 17). You want to gain honor and pass for humble, and take the telling of your faults to be a good means to that end; that is why you tell them. But you do not think it a good means to gain honor to have another person telling you them and rebuking you; rather you take that for a thing redounding to your dishonor and discredit, and therefore you cannot stand it. Both the one and the other is pride. Hence it is that, though the man sees that what they admonish him of is true, and there is reason for saying it, nevertheless he is troubled and feels it deeply.

Thus we shall no more say: *Rebuke the wise man, and he will love thee,* since we no longer find nowadays these wise men who are glad to be found fault with, and take correction and admonition thankfully. What we can say today is what the same Wise Man said a little before on this subject: *Beware of correcting and rebuking the scorner and the proud man, because he will hold thee in abhorrence* (Prov. ix. 8), and you will make a bad job of him. That is the usual thing now, and what we commonly see in the world. Evil men love not, but rather hold in abhorrence, those who admonish them of their defects and tell them the truth. *Veritas odium parit*—"Truth begets hatred." The saints liken them to patients out of their mind and mad, who will not let the doctor come near them, but shun him and resist his treatment and applications, and throw them aside, such being the grievousness of their malady and such their insensibility to the fact that they are ill. This is the comparison made by the Holy Ghost: *He that hateth* *rebukes is a fool* (Prov. xii. 1). Speaking of the man who abhors correction and admonition, I not only say that he is wanting in virtue and humility, but also that he is wanting in common sense and judgment; he is mad and off his mind, since he refuses medical treatment, and resists the physician and vents his indignation upon him who wants to come and heal him.

CHAPTER III

Of the Inconveniences and Losses That Follow from Not Taking Correction Well

THIS pride and folly goes so far that now scarcely anyone is found to venture to correct and advise another of his faults, since no one is willing to undertake a bad job, or as they say, to provoke an uproar at his own expense. And the man gets what he deserves for this. For what does the sick man deserve who will not let himself be attended to? He deserves to go unattended and be left to die. Now that is what he deserves who will not be corrected and takes amiss any admonition given him. *He who hateth reproofs shall die; he who casteth off discipline, despiseth his own soul,* says the Wise Man (Prov. xv. 10, 32). He deserves that no one should correct him or admonish him of anything; that he should come to have grave faults, manifest to all the rest of the community, and people should be complaining of them, and yet there should be no one to tell him. Such is the usual fate of such folk, and it is one of the greatest punishments that could befall them. *Curavimus Babylonem et non est sanata, derelinquamus eam*—"He has no mind to profit by attention and medical care, let us leave him" (Isaias li. 9). When a vineyard is left unpruned and undug, it is gone to waste. So they leave a man forlorn, giving him up for lost, for his not taking well advice and correction.

Our Father Francis Borgia, speaking of the inconveniences and mischiefs that follow from not taking correction and admonition well, says that thence we are likely to settle down in one or other of two very awkward situations. They will be these. Either for lack of correction and warnings defects will come to be fixtures, seated and, as it were, quite at home in those who have them, there being no one to dare to set about applying a remedy to such an impatient sick person; or, if admonitions are given to him who needs them, and he, instead of being grateful, draws from thence bitterness and resentment, and holds aloof from his admonitor, in a few days the house will become a stagnant pool of gall and bitterness. This will be due to want of knowledge on the part of its imperfect members, who will not admit of advice and correction, but take for a wrong what they ought to take for a great benefit, and are aggrieved and irritated where they ought to be grateful, turning their remedy into poison. Thus one should greatly fear: "Are they leaving me to myself for a cure, because I am a bad patient? Are they giving over admonishing me of my faults, because at one time I did not take the correction and admonition well?" Our Father Francis desired in his day that we should keep and carry on that simplicity, charity, and plainness of speech that marked our beginnings, when correction and an admonition of a defect not only gave no occasion for bitterness, but begot heartfelt love and great gratitude.

A grave doctor likens those who will not take correction to the devil, because they make themselves incorrigible. Now to be open to correction or incorrigible is what marks off the sinful man from the devil; for man, however sinful he be, while he is in this mortal life is capable of correction, and the devil not. He quotes accordingly the saying of the Wise Man: *He that abhorreth correction is as the footstep of the sinner* (Ecclus. xxi. 7), that is, of the devil, who is called by excellence the sinner. As the footprint and impress of the foot is like the foot, so he who abhors correction is just like the devil in making himself incorrigible, since he shuts the door to one of the most proper, powerful, and effectual means of amendment. St. Basil says of such folk a thing worthy of consideration: "The conversation and company of these people who refuse correction and take advice badly is very hurtful to the rest of the religious with whom they live. By their bad example they spread the infection of having little taste, or rather no taste at all, for being corrected and advised; thus they draw folk away from the end and purpose for which they came into religion, which was amendment and reform." He would have such people removed from intercourse and conversation with the rest, that they may not spread the infection.

CHAPTER IV

How Important It Is to Take Correction and Admonition Well

A PHILOSOPHER here gives a very good piece of advice, such that it would seem nothing more could be asked for in this matter. That philosopher is Galen, who, not content with writing maxims for the cure of bodies, has also written a book how to know and cure the ailments of the soul. There this philosopher says: Anyone who wishes to amend his faults and make progress in virtue, should seek out a good and prudent man to warn him of them; and if he finds a proper person for that purpose, he should call him aside and ask him very earnestly to do him the favor of admonishing him of all the faults that he observes in him, offering and promising to be very grateful for it and to take him for a true friend; telling him that hereby he will do him a greater favor and benefit than if he cured him of some ailment of the body, inasmuch as the soul is more than the body. And if the other undertakes this office, and says that he will do so, and afterwards some days pass without his admonishing him of anything, complain to him, he says, and ask him once more, more earnestly than you did the first time, not to do so, but admonish you at once when he sees you in any fault. And if he answers you that he certainly has not been unmindful of his promise, but that all this time there has been nothing in you that deserved unfavorable notice, do not believe him at all, but make up your mind that the reason of his not having admonished you has not been that there have been no faults giving ground for admonition, but one of three things. Either through negligence and carelessness on his part he has taken no account of your defects and forgotten all about it—for there are very few who will take such care and charge themselves in this manner with your improvement; or in the second place, if he has observed and noticed any faults in you, as possibly he may have noticed some, understand that he has failed to tell you out of shyness and bashfulness, and because he did not want to get out of your good graces and lose your friendship, knowing that that is what comes of telling truths nowadays; or thirdly, because perhaps on one occasion he saw that you did not take well the correction and admonition he gave you, and therefore (notwithstanding all that you had said) he could not believe that you were in earnest in your desire of being corrected and admonished, since he attached more faith to deeds than to words. He goes on to say: "Even though sometimes the matter on which your friend admonishes you is not so, or is not so great as he says, still take care not to disavow it or excuse it; in the first place, because it may be that your friend is a shrewder observer than you are, for it is much easier to see another's faults than one's own; secondly, because, even though the case was not as stated, still it will do you good to be more cautious and better on your guard as to your behavior, and more careful henceforth to give no occasion for the like mistakes."

All this is said by that philosopher, and all of it is necessary if we are to find anyone who will cheerfully do us this kindness. There is great difficulty in doing it, as anyone may see for himself, not only on the side of the person corrected, being so sensitive to correction and rebuke, but also on the side of the giver of the correction, when he is commissioned to admonish others to correct some fault that they have got. Even to the superior himself this is one of his greatest troubles when there is scant virtue and humility in his subjects. On the one hand he feels obliged to correct them by reason of his office, and on the other he is afraid that they cannot but resent the correction and admonition. He goes about it as though he had to give them the cautery, all in a perspiration himself, and sometimes in perplexity as to whether he shall mention the thing or leave it alone. Now he thinks it will be well to mention it, watching for some good opportunity and favorable conjuncture, and employing some manner of salve and sugary words to diminish the bitterness of the reproof. Another time he experiences such difficulty on the part of the subject that he thinks it better to leave the thing unmentioned, although the fault is there. He is afraid that the mention of it will do more harm than good, and will serve for nothing but to inflame the wound and make things still more unpleasant, one possible result being that the offender henceforth will do his office or ministry with less liking and less ease than before. The sun softens and melts wax, but dries and hardens mud. When plants have taken firm root in the soil, air and sun help to make them grow and fructify; but if they are not well rooted, these same agencies and influences dry them up and make them rot the sooner. On this motive superiors cease to admonish some of their subjects of their defects, because they get worse under treatment and turn their medicine into poison. They fancy that to be spite and aversion and ill will, which is really love and desire of their good, and so they deserve to be left alone.

If, then, you do not want to be given up as incorrigible and incurable, you must take admonition and correction very well. *How good it is, on being rebuked, to show repentance!* (Ecclus. xx. 4). How good it is, and how well it looks, on being corrected and admonished of one's fault, to recognize it and show regret for it and purpose of amendment! And though on some occasion you have not committed the fault that they admonish you of, or it has not been in that manner or so great as that, you should not show it, but thank your admonitor for his good will and the good turn he does you, and promise him amendment, saying that you will keep an eye on that in future, and that he has done you a great charity, for thus you will encourage him to admonish you another time; whereas, if you at once set to work excusing and defending yourself, he will not advise you another time of what perhaps it was quite necessary you should be told. There are people who, when they are admonished of any fault, at once excuse themselves; and when they cannot excuse it altogether, they look for reasons to diminish and make less of it, showing that it was not so bad. This is the way to shut the door against anyone's admonishing you another time; for, as your admonitor sees that upon sundry admonitions you never have acknowledged your fault, but always find excuses to get out of it, he makes up his mind never more to speak to you of the thing. This is what you get by your excuses, or satisfactions, as you call them, that no one now will ever give you an admonition; and besides, all such behavior is disedifying and looks bad.

Even in superiors it is taken to be a great fault not to take well the admonitions and counsels given them, nor show any disposition to hear them willingly. This is so true that they say it is better to choose for government a man of less wisdom, if he is aware of his deficiencies and takes well the admonitions and counsels of the wise, than another who knows more, and is very confident in himself, thinking that he knows all about it, and having no taste for admonitions nor any readiness to take in good part the advice given him. Scripture is full of this topic, especially the Sapiential Books. *Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him* (Prov. xxvi. 12). *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but the wise man takes counsel of another* (Prov. xii. 15). *I, wisdom, dwell in counsel* (Prov. viii. 12). *In abundance of counsel there is prosperity* (Prov. xi. 14). And one of the conditions that the Apostle St. James lays down of the wisdom that descends from heaven, is that it is not contentious nor obstinate, but peaceful and open to persuasion (James iii. 17). Now, if it is a praiseworthy thing in superiors willingly to hear the admonition and advice of private persons, and the opposite course is blameworthy and reprehensible, with how much greater reason are inferiors open to reprehension, when they take not well advice and correction even from superiors!

That we may set more store by this and animate ourselves more to it, it is well that we should understand and consider one great advantage there is in it. It is that, when the subject takes admonition and correction well, and the superior is satisfied on that point, faults give the superior little concern, because if they are seen, the remedy is seen along with them. But when this is not the case, the door is seen to be shut against the requisite remedy. These are the distresses and anxieties of superiors. Thus it is a good plan for one in private station to tell the superior of the readiness and desire that he has of being admonished, and to beg him in all earnestness as a father to correct and admonish him with clearness and plainness of all his shortcomings; and not to mind if on some occasion possibly he has resented correction as a man and not taken it as well as he should. And he should not be satisfied with making this request once for all, or saying the thing as a formality, but he should do it time after time and with great earnestness. Make sure that all this importunity is necessary to get yourself believed, and have this service rendered you well and carefully, as the difficulty of it requires. Thus, though in other things we should rejoice at being taken for imperfect men and unmortified, since there are plenty of things in which we are such, yet in this you should not allow, or give occasion for the superior to think of you, that you are so proud or so unmortified as not to take well the correction or warning that he may give you; rather, try to let him be quite satisfied on this point, that you may not be deprived of so great a benefit and such a principal means of your improvement.

St. Basil says: "As the sick man, desirous and anxious for the recovery of his health, takes in good part the treatment that the doctor gives him, though it be rough and hard, and is not angry with his physician, nor harbors the thought that he means any mischief in treating him so; so the humble man, desirous in good earnest of his spiritual improvement, takes correction and admonition in good part, without thinking for a moment that it is done out of ill-will or passion." If for the recovery of bodily health we willingly take very bitter medicines, and permit the physician or surgeon to cut and burn where he pleases, and we are grateful for it and take it for a great boon, so it will be reasonable, says St. Basil, that we should do the same for the spiritual health of our soul and the general good of all our order, even though the treatment and correction be rough and hard.

CHAPTER V

What Has Been Said in the Foregoing Chapter Confirmed by Examples

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, to exhort us to take correction and admonition well, brings the example related in Holy Writ of Moses. Moses was a man so eminent for wisdom that God at last chose him for leader of His people, and worked many miracles for him as well in Egypt as in the desert. Nevertheless he took very well the advice and counsel a man in private station, Jethro, his father-in-law, gave him, as regards his office as governor and judge of his people, not to seek to do everything himself, but to choose some to help him in the work: *That is not a good plan of thine, foolishly fatiguing and wearing thyself out with so much labor* (Exod. xviii. 17-18). St. Chrysostom there observes that he did not answer: "See who is coming now to give us advice!" as many do who, though the advice be good, disdain to take it from such a person giving it them; but he took the advice with humility, and put it into execution.

St. Cyprian and St. Augustine observe to this same effect the example of the Apostle St. Peter, when St. Paul reproved him concerning circumcision, which he wished at the time them to receive who were converted from heathendom [not so Gal. ii. 11-12]. See, he says, how the Apostle St. Peter did not presume on himself, nor take an attitude of superiority, saying: "I am primate of the Church, and to me the greater credit should be given, and all should follow and obey." See how he did not despise St. Paul for having been a persecutor of the Church, and did not disdain to be corrected and advised by him, but took the admonition very well, and gave in at once to reason and truth.

That example also is worthy of memory which the Emperor Theodosius gave, taking with such great humility the correction and admonition which St. Ambrose gave him, when he excommunicated him and forbade him to enter the church on account of the cruel and unjust punishment which he had inflicted on the city of Thessalonica; and again when Theodosius had offered his gift at the altar, and wanted to stay within the sanctuary rails. St. Ambrose sent to tell him to go out into the body of the church, since that place was reserved for the priests, and the purple robe makes emperors, but not priests, as is recounted at length in the Ecclesiastical History, where with reason the question is raised which is most worthy of praise, the constancy and fortitude of the holy bishop, or the marvelous obedience and humility of that most religious prince.

Of the same St. Ambrose it is told in his Life that, when people admonished him of some fault, he rendered thanks for it and reckoned it a singular benefit. In the chronicles of the Cistercian Order it is told of a monk of the Monastery of Clairvaux, that every time he was reproved or admonished of any fault, he recited at least one Our Father for his admonitor. And it is said there that this custom continued in that monastery, and was observed as an inviolable rule.

Simon Metaphrustes tells of the holy Abbot Arsenius, a man famous for holiness all over the monastic world, and who in the world had held high rank as tutor to the Emperor Theodosius' sons, Arcadius and Honorius, who afterwards succeeded their father and were emperors themselves, that for all his sanctity he had some little faults from which his holiness did not deliver him. As he had been of such high rank and had lived in such comfort in the world, there remained with him some remnants of the easy ways and liberty of the palace where he had been brought up; thus, when he sat with the rest of the community, he had a way of crossing his legs. This looked bad to all the fathers as being contrary to modesty. They wanted to tell him of it, but no one dared, feeling much difficulty in bringing such a trifle to the notice of so grave and venerable a father.

They consulted about it, and the Abbot Pastor, a prudent and holy man, suggested an excellent means. He made it up with all the other fathers: "Let us do this: the first time we are all together, I will put myself in that posture, and do you rebuke me for it, and I will correct myself, and so he will take the hint." They all thought it an excellent expedient, and did so the next time they were together for spiritual conference. The Abbot Pastor took the same posture as Arsenius, and the old men rated him soundly for the want of modesty and the bad example which he showed; and he at once put himself in a proper attitude. Abbot Arsenius, seeing what passed in his neighbor, without seeming to do so, lowered his leg little by little; and history says that he took the admonition so well as never again to fall into that fault. So each one should take any public admonition and rebuke that they give to another. Hence also will be seen the difficulty that we said there was in correcting and admonishing another.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Rule and Constitution That We Have in the Society, of Discovering the Faults of Our Brethren Immediately to the Superior

THE Ninth Rule of the Summary of our Constitutions says as follows: "For their greater advancement in spirit, and especially for their greater humiliation and self-contempt, everyone should be content that all his errors and faults, and all things whatsoever may be observed and noted in him, may be made known to the superior by anyone who has knowledge of them out of confession." As a foundation of what we have got to say, it is well for all to know that, while all our constitutions are approved and confirmed by sovereign pontiffs—and there is put at the beginning of them the *motu proprio* of Gregory XIII, whereby they are approved—this rule and constitution of fraternal correction received the particular approbation of the sovereign pontiff, and that as the result of a judicial inquiry, which sets it in a category by itself. For in Rome a priest who had been a member of the Society, and was dismissed from it as being a restless and mutinous spirit, printed a fragment of the "Summa" of Cardinal Toledo, and in it there was a chapter saying that a certain religious order, to which he wished well for the learned men there were in it, had their rules contrary to the Gospel (Matt. viii. 15), whereby faults should be discovered immediately to the superior without previous notice given to the delinquent, and this led to many awkward consequences. Father Everard Mercurian, who was then General, complained to the Pope; and his holiness desired to see the book and our rule, and took information on the way in which the rule was carried out in the Society; and thereupon declared that not only was the rule not contrary to the Gospel, but was very far from being open to such a false accusation, and contained in it evangelical and apostolical perfection; and he ordered that part of the book to be prohibited, as was done by Cardinal Sirleto, to whom that office appertained.

This was enough to justify the rule; but for our greater satisfaction and consolation, leaving scholastic disputation and argumentations to the schools, we will treat here of two things: first, the importance and necessity of this rule; and secondly, sundry reasons which show and declare how well founded it is in reason. As for the first, the importance and necessity of this rule will be understood from another very important rule that we have, of which we spoke in the last treatise, of giving an account of conscience to the superior. All the reasons and suitable motives that our Father alleges in the Constitutions in favor of each individual's manifesting his conscience to the superior—all these reasons, I say, bear out this rule and show the importance and necessity thereof. These reasons we set forth in that other place at length, and they may be reduced to two heads: first, to the end that superiors may be able to rule, direct, and cure; secondly, that so the superior may be able to ordain and provide better what makes for the good of the whole body of the Society For these same reasons our Father judged that it was very important that the superior should be advised of your faults and defects by anyone who knew them out of confession. He wanted to have a surety in this matter, in case you should be neglectful of a thing to which you are bound, and which is so important for your good and for the general good of the Society. Thus your brother supplies for what you ought to have done, and were bound to do, according to your institute. All this makes for your greater good and that of the order, for our greater security in our ministries, and for preventing superiors from ever putting anyone in danger of spiritual shipwreck.

Under the second head many reasons may be given in confirmation and justification of this rule. Let this be the first, the practice that there is of it in other orders of ancient standing. In the order of the blessed St. Francis, they have the same ordinance that the Society has, that faults be told to the superior without previous warning to the brother that has committed them, as may be seen in the book entitled, *A Quiet Conscience (Serena Conscientia),* Question 104. And in the general statutes, called "of Barcelona" because they were made in a general chapter of theirs held at Barcelona in the year 1451, it is said that, when any go out of the monastery, they must after their return tell the prelate of any serious things that have happened to their companions; and that whoever fails to do this shall be punished with fasts on bread and water, and other penances at the discretion of the superior. And the same is said in the most ancient statutes of the order, in the fifth chapter. And when St. Bonaventure was general of the order, in a general chapter, with consent of the whole chapter, this ordinance was confirmed and approved; and it was enacted that any teaching to the contrary should be cast out of the order as pestilent and destructive of all regular discipline, and that anyone daring to teach it should be deprived of his books, and of active and passive voice, and even should be put in prison. And that it may be seen how ancient this teaching is, and how it has ever been the received practice among those who were aiming at perfection, Abbot Smaragdus quotes a decree of the abbots of old, Stephen and Paul, which speaks thus: "If anyone sees another doing or saying anything bad, and does not inform the superior at once without delay, let him understand that he is an abettor and accomplice in that sin, and it is as though he had sinned and done this thing; for he is not free from suspicion of complicity in a sin who, being able to remedy it, does not remedy it." And thereupon he quotes another decree, which says thus: "If anyone knows of another's design to fly from the monastery, and does not at once reveal it, without doubt he is partaker in his perdition, and let such a one be removed from intercourse and conversation with the rest of the religious until the other is brought back." Thus this is not a new thing, nor proper and peculiar to us, but very ancient and common to other orders. This religious usage is founded on the end and purpose of the precept of fraternal correction, which is the amendment and cure of my brother, which commonly may be hoped for through the superior and not through any private person.

The second reason by which this rule is justified, and shown not to contain any such rigor or difficulty as some imagine, is that what is enjoined upon us and practised in the Society is to tell the fault of our brother to the superior as spiritual father, that he may correct the offender with his fatherly charity and love; and that he who has fallen, or was on the point of falling, may rise and amend, as is also declared in the twentieth of the Common Rules, which says thus: "If anyone knows of any grave temptation of another, let him warn the superior thereof, that he by his fatherly care and providence may be able to find suitable remedy." Thus the other's fault is not told to the superior as judge, nor in such a way as to enable him to proceed to punish it, but as to a father who may be able to improve and not hurt him, by the proper remedy being applied to his case, and the ill consequences being prevented that might ensue if the superior did not know and apply the remedy (Suarez, "De Poenitentia," sect. 4, p. 22).

Thirdly, this is confirmed by Father Master Nadal, a man distinguished for learning and virtue, with this good reason. We see, he says, in the Church of God, as well in ecclesiastical as in secular government, that for elections to offices inquiry is made into things very private, according to the nature and requirements of the office. This is not done as a first step to punishment, although something may be found that deserves it; but because I want to know to whom I am entrusting my church, or my house, or my property, or my soul. But in the Society all are eligible for missions, that being proper to our institute; for which missions is required a very solid, not a weak and frail virtue that may come to ruin and destroy the good name of the order. The superior, therefore, may inform himself and be informed of these private matters, and lay down this rule for it, that he may be sure not to make a mistake in a matter of such importance as this, a matter that so much concerns you and the whole order.

In the fourth place, that it may be seen how reasonably this rule is framed, let us put in the scales on the one side the harm that ensues to you from your fault's being told to the superior as to a father, and on the other the losses and inconveniences that come of its not being told; and see which scale weighs the heavier. The harm to you is a little shame, and a trifling loss of credit that you seem to yourself to suffer; but the harm that may and generally does ensue on the other side, when these things are not told to the superior, is first of all the fact that the mischief remains to be remedied, and as it is not remedied nor checked, it is apt to grow, and even to spread and infect others. Moreover, the usual outcome is apt to be your disgrace and a note of infamy to your order, since after all, sooner or later, in one way or another, the whole matter comes out; and what might before have been remedied with a little holy water, if you had told it to the superior at the outset, as you should have told it, will now have to come to be dealt with by cauteries of fire and the surgeon's knife—I mean, dismissal from the Society—vastly more than a little shame and that slight loss of credit which you think you sustain by the superior's knowing your fault. So I say that not only is there nothing done against charity by discovering to the superior the fault of your brother, but there is an obligation of doing so, an obligation which you should scruple to neglect, an obligation so serious that it may amount to a mortal sin to neglect it; not by virtue of the rule, since our rules do not bind under sin, as we have said above, but for the gravity of the matter and the serious consequences and mischief that may and often do ensue, of which he is the cause who might have prevented them by giving notice in time, and did not when he should have done so. The blessed St. Basil says, exhorting hereto: "To hide your brother's sin and refuse to reveal it to the superior is nothing short of helping the sick man who is on his deathbed to die quickly." Sin covered up and dissembled is like an interior abscess, that spreads and spreads within till it reaches the heart and proves fatal. And as he would do us a good turn who should open the abscess and expel the poison locked in there, even though it cost us some pain; and on the contrary he would play the part of an enemy who under pretext of compassion should refuse to open the abscess and cast the purulent matter out, so, says St. Basil, he does not the work of a friend, but of an enemy, who cloaks over the fault of his brother, and refuses to lay it open to the superior as to a physician and father, to treat and remedy it; this is like helping a man to die. St. Augustine, speaking on this subject, says: "Think not that it is ill done on your part when you reveal this to the superior; rather you would do ill in cloaking your brother's misdeed over. You might have corrected him, and by silence and dissimulation you let him perish. If he had a sore on his body, and wished to hide it for fear of the cautery, would it not be cruelty of you to keep silent about it, and a work of charity and mercy to reveal it? How much more so in regard of the inward sores of the soul?"

The dissimulation that some are wont to practise, by way of keeping what they call the law of men of honor, is no act of charity. There are some who take it for a point of honor and good breeding not to go with stories of other people's faults to the superior, and feel great repugnance to giving evidence against them, taking it to be a degradation; and they say they have no mind to go talebearing, nor to do harm to anyone, or get anyone into the superior's black books. This is not the spirit of religion, much less of the Society, but laws of the world, evil codices, secular cabals and cliques very prejudicial to religion. It is not talebearing, it is not doing harm to your brother; it is doing him good. The opposite course is doing harm to him and to the order. How can it be right or reasonable to be unfaithful to your order to please some particular person? To whom are you more bound, to this individual or to the order? To be "a close and safe man," and have a reputation for that, is a thing that one should take for an insult and a degradation; there is no degradation in being loyal to your order and keeping its rule. And St. Basil concludes: "Let none, then, conceal the sin of his brother, lest, instead of loving him and doing him good, he be the cause of his final ruin." Seek not, then, means of concealment to hide the malady and infirmity of your brother, but manifest it straightway to the physician whose office it is to tend and remedy it, before it becomes incurable and calls for the cautery and the knife. This will be true love and true charity. In this way you will save your brother; in the other way perhaps you will contribute to his ruin.

These reasons, and others that theologians and saints allege, are sufficient proof that this rule is quite just and holy, even though the religious makes no renunciation of his right. Such renunciation is not made in other orders; but in the Society there is, besides what has been said, another particular reason, which is that anyone wishing to enter the Society has the rules given him, and a Summary of the Constitutions which he has to observe, where this rule is set down. And they ask him if he will be content to submit to these rules, and in particular in point of this very rule his consent is expressly asked to what is said in it. And every six months during the first two years of his novitiate, before he is admitted to his vows, the rule is once more put before him, and the same question asked. And the master of novices has a rule to explain to the novices more in particular the things in which afterwards they may find some difficulty, among which this rule is specified, and so it is done. And they say that they are content to submit to it for their greater spiritual good and their greater abasement and humiliation, as the rule says, which is another particular help to the further smoothing down of this difficulty.

It is certain that each one, when he enters religion, may for his greater perfection cede the right which he has in the matter, and consent to all his faults' being made known immediately to the superior, without his being first warned in private. Each man is master and administrator of his own honor and fame; and for his own good and spiritual advancement he may agree to lose it with the superior, or with whomsoever the superior wishes, so long as there is no particular circumstance which obliges him not to part with it, as it is certain that there is no such circumstance in this case. As a man may lawfully reveal to the superior his sin, however grave and secret it may be, so also he may give leave to another to reveal it. This is what they do who enter the Society, by the consent which we have mentioned. The consent asked of them is to the doing of what is prescribed in the said rule, and they answer that they give it; which is nothing less than a cession of their rights. Supposing one in confession, or in confidence, tells me of a grievous sin, and I say to him: "To make better sure of a remedy, would you like or be satisfied that I should speak of it to the superior, he being a very learned and a very prudent man?" and he says, "Yes, I am satisfied," it is clear that by the tenor of those words he cedes the right that he had that his fault should be told to nobody, and that I acquire a right to be able to consult my superior about it.

Add to this the ordinary practice of this rule which the novices see in the Society for two years before they take their vows. This is notice enough to give them to understand that they have renounced their right in the matter, even though they were not told in particular and expressly that they renounce it. It is in the same way that the Carthusian monk renounces the natural right that he has to preserve his life by eating meat, by the usage there is of this in his order, although he does not say in particular and expressly that he renounces it—and that is a greater right than the right to reputation. Again, he who is ordained to the sacred order of subdiaconate renounces the right of marrying, and becomes bound by a solemn vow of chastity, although he does not make any such vow in particular and expressly. So our Father Francis Borgia, when he was General, replied to some provincial congregations in Spain, who asked him whether persons entering the Society renounced their right in this matter. And the General of the Society has the right to declare the meaning of our constitutions, as is stated in our bulls and privileges.

Finally, since the writing of the above, what we have said has been determined in the Sixth General Congregation, and ordered to be explained to the novices. And as is observed there, the general congregation has the privilege from the apostolic see of explaining doubtful points of the institute. The congregation there adds that those words of the rule, "by anyone who knows them out of confession," apply to things noted and observed by the giver of the information, and not to things which the persons involved impart to another in confidence by way of asking advice for their direction and aid.

Hereby are allayed all the difficulties and occasions of complaint that might occur, since *scienti et volenti non fit iniuria*—"to one who knows and is satisfied with the thing, no injustice is done." You were told, to start with, when you were received, that such was the practice here, and you said that you were glad to submit to it. If since then you resent and feel aggrieved at your faults' being told to the superior, do not throw the blame on the rule, nor on your brother who keeps it; do not complain of that, but of yourself, that, whereas now you ought to have more virtue and humility than when you first began, you have less, since you are no longer in the state of mind in which you then were. This is the whole hub of the difficulty which some make about this rule; and so our Father puts in the text of the rule that foundation which is necessary for its support, which is humility and desire of spiritual advancement. If we had that, we should rejoice at others' knowing our faults, that we might be held in less esteem; how much more in being corrected and admonished for them! Little humility and virtue can he have, who has not enough even for this.

CHAPTER VII

Sundry Important Warnings in This Matter

FROM what has been said we may gather sundry warnings, as well for him who is corrected as for him whose duty is to correct and admonish. First, for him who is corrected and admonished, it must be observed that it is a great fault, and argues great imperfection, when upon the superior's rebuking or admonishing anyone of any defect, the man resents the admonition, and thereupon goes up and down inquiring who has told the superior, and whether he has told more, or exaggerated the thing much; and takes to complaining afterwards and offering excuses to this person and to that, making out that this thing was not so, or that it was not so bad as was represented. That is a great fault, and often does more harm and gives greater disedification than the original delinquency. We all know well and acknowledge that "I am a man and have my faults;" but when a person resents things in this way, we judge him to be very imperfect, showing as he does much pride, and giving occasion for our suspecting him of having no mind for amendment and spiritual improvement, but caring only to have an easy time of it and stand well in public regard and estimation.

St. Bernard says very well: "As for him who seeks to throw a veil even over the faults in which they catch him, and perhaps tells a smart lie to excuse them, how shall I believe that he will reveal the secret faults which he alone can know?" The truly humble man, who knows himself and takes himself for what he is, is not astonished at anything they say of him, nor is it anything new to him, since he always knows of greater faults in himself and thinks what they say little in comparison with what there was to say. To your mind, your fault seems less than it is, and sometimes no fault at all, because you see it with eyes blinded by self-love; but your neighbor, viewing it with dispassionate eyes, sees it in a different light. But suppose a case in which your accuser has been guilty of exaggeration, stating the matter as it appeared to him, do you not remember that, when you entered religion, they asked you if you would be content to suffer injuries and false witnesses and affronts from people within the house and from people outside, and you answered Yes? How is it that you have now forgotten and repented of your profession? You should have been glad of your accuser's, with the best will in the world, saying more than what happened; and even though it be that it was not with a good intention, or any kindly feeling that he said it, you should still have rejoiced for what concerns yourself, even your greater humiliation, and over your being made like to and imitating Christ, our Lord. How much more, when it is said with a good intention, and you feel that he speaks the truth in what he says, and meaning your good, should you not be glad? In this way you gain more with men, and with God likewise; in the other way, when you think to gain, you lose.

Much greater would be the fault if, lighting upon him who might have given the information, you were to go the length of telling him so, and complain because he spoke, or because he said too much, or told the story in another way from what had occurred; or if you frowned or looked daggers at him, giving him to understand what was thought of him for what he had done. Anyone with a sincere desire of amendment and improvement would rather wish to have many eyes fixed upon him, to help and oblige him more to the perfection that he desires. Such was the desire of St. Bernard. He says: "Who will give me a hundred shepherds to be told off to keep me! The more I have of them, the greater the sense of security with which I go to pasture. O amazing folly! A man has no hesitation in gathering a multitude of other people under his keep, but cannot endure to have one watching over his soul. I fear more the teeth of the wolf than the crook of the shepherd." That is what is to be feared, the wolf; but the precaution and pipe and care of the shepherd is not a thing to fear, but to desire. This is the good spirit; and, contrariwise, to resent there being eyes to watch and keep guard over you, besides being evil, is generally a sign of there being good reason to look after you with some care. And let this be observed also in other similar matters. We see by experience that they who complain of and resent their being carefully looked after, are just the persons who have most need of it, and by thus complaining they render themselves more open to suspicion. A good and humble religious finds more to fear in looking after himself than another can fear about it; and therefore he finds matter of rejoicing when they help him in this case, since it is his business that is being furthered, and he it is that is concerned in it.

On the part of him whose office it is to give the admonition, it is necessary to observe in the first place that the revealing of your brother's faults must be to the superior immediately, without other roundabout processes; as to a father, and under such secrecy as the fault requires, that he as a father may apply the remedy and prevent the mischief that might thence arise. This should be carefully taken notice of; for sometimes it may happen that a man will not tell the faults to the superior, and will tell them to a private person, who has no means of remedying them. That would be very ill done, because it would be detraction.

Secondly, as regards the mode of procedure in this manifestation, the rule says that it is to be done "with due love and charity," words which gave great satisfaction to His Holiness Gregory XIII when he examined these rules. He who wishes to do the right thing here must look to it carefully that he be not moved by passion or envy, and that no indiscreet zeal prompt him to act hastily and represent the thing as of greater gravity than it really is, and tell a crooked story, or exaggerate things, making of a fly an elephant, and going from particular to general, or putting forward as a certainty what is a mere suspicion and perhaps a fancy of his own brain. This makes much matter of scruple, and is the cause of great troubles.

Thirdly, it is to be observed that whoever gives the admonition should not cease to do his duty even though the party admonished does not do his, nor takes the admonition in the right way. St. Augustine, arguing well that he who does not take correction properly is like a raving madman who resists physician and medicine, says: "What are we to do with him? Are we perhaps to cease working for his cure? No, by no means; for though the insane patient will not brook being tied or attended to, and although he who is suffering from a deadly sleeping sickness will not have them awaken him, nevertheless the diligence of charity insists on binding and tending the one and awakening the other. Both seem to be offended, and take it for a trouble and a grievance, while their malady is on them; but afterwards, upon their recovery, they are grateful for the benefit and good turn that has been done them"—*Ambo offenduntur, sed ambo diliguntur; ambo molestantur; quamdiu aegri sunt, indignantur, sed ambo sanati gratulantur.*

Thus we are to hope that our brother also will behave, although at the time when the admonition is given him he resents it; but when he is himself again, and thinks the matter over by himself and in presence of God, he will come to see reason, and acknowledge and be grateful for the benefit done him. Even brute animals, however much they resist, are at last broken in by men, with much trouble and sometimes danger to their keepers. Of them no gratitude is to be expected, because they have no understanding for that. But how much more is it to be expected, says the saint, that we shall succeed in curing and correcting our brother, that he perish not everlastingly. After all, he has understanding, and will be able in time to recognize facts, and be grateful for the benefit done him, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *He will find more gratitude who correcteth his neighbor than he who deceiveth him with flatteries* (Prov. xxviii. 23).

St. Basil quotes to this effect the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians (II Cor. ii. 2): *And who is it that gladdeneth me but he whom I make sad?* This pain and sadness that you conceive upon correction gladdens me, because I see that it is to end in good. What for the present gives pain is a cause of health, because it makes me careful and diligent in future. It is *a sadness according to God* (II Cor. vii. 11), because it is cause of amendment. But, you will say, there are some who get worse for correction and admonition. To this, St. Augustine well replies: "Are we, then, to drop medical treatment and cease to tend the sick because some are not cured by it? No, surely not. Neither, then, should we omit correction because some do not profit thereby. The physician, whether spiritual or corporal, must do what in him lies and what his art teaches him, and not at once throw the case up, but use and try the means at his disposal."

Concerning the method to be employed in correcting, St. Basil says that he who corrects another ought to imitate physicians, who are not angry with their patient, but all their contention and indignation is against the sickness, and to that they devote their applications and remedies. So he who corrects another ought not to be angry or irritated with the sinner, but give all his care and attention to vanishing the defect and vice from the soul of his brother. And the way he should take herein, says the saint, should be that which a father who was a physician would take in treating a son for a wound or painful sore: see with what tenderness, gentleness and kindness he would treat him; in short, he is like one who feels his son's pain as his own. In this same way, then, with this tenderness, gentleness, and kindness should the superior correct his subjects, his spiritual children, *in a spirit of gentleness,* says St. Paul (Gal.

vi. 1). The persecutor who hacks men to pieces, and the executioner who quarters them, says St. Augustine, take no thought of hitting upon joints, or where their knife will pass better; but the surgeon, operating on a patient, considers first where he should cut, and goes about it with much delicacy and caution, because his object is to heal, and not to hack to pieces. This is the way the superior should go about it who wishes to heal his subject by correction and admonition, not to give him pain and do him harm.

This is a thing of great importance, earnestly inculcated by the saints. Let him who corrects another, they say, be greatly on his guard against any display of passion, anger, or indignation, for that will be the ruin of the whole business; it will not cure or amend the delinquent, but make him worse. And they quote that saying of the Apostle: *The servant of God should correct with meekness them who resist the truth* (II Tim. ii. 25). *With meekness*, though our version says *with modesty,* but it all comes to the same; for in order to correct with modesty, you must make no display of passion or excitement. Finally, the correction must be done with a kind air and gentle mien, and with a gracious countenance, so that the person corrected may understand that it springs from motives of affection and charity and desire of his welfare, for in that way it promises to be productive of much good.